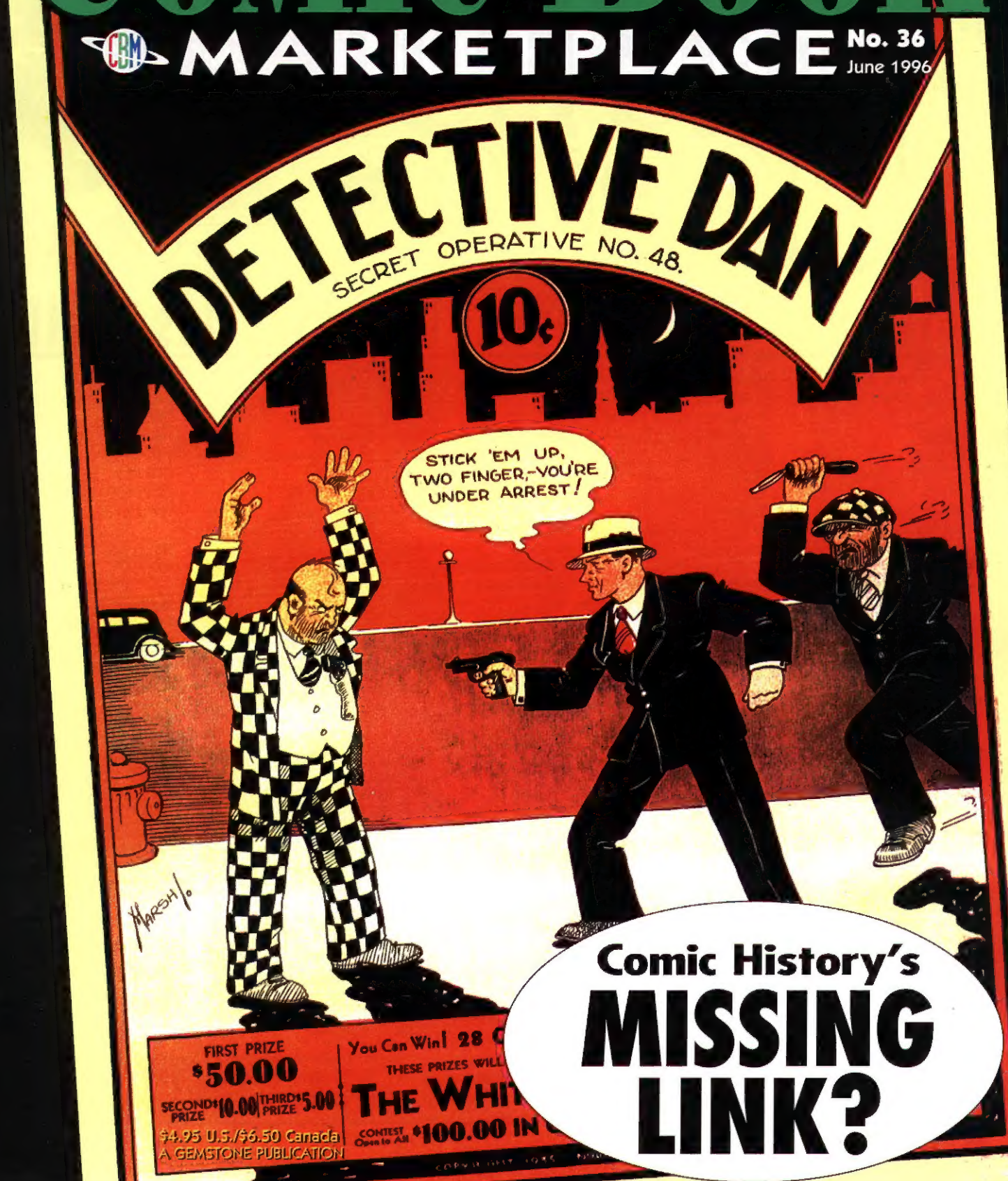
The Magazine for Golden Age & Silver Age Collectors!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 36
June 1996



Comic History's MISSING LINK?

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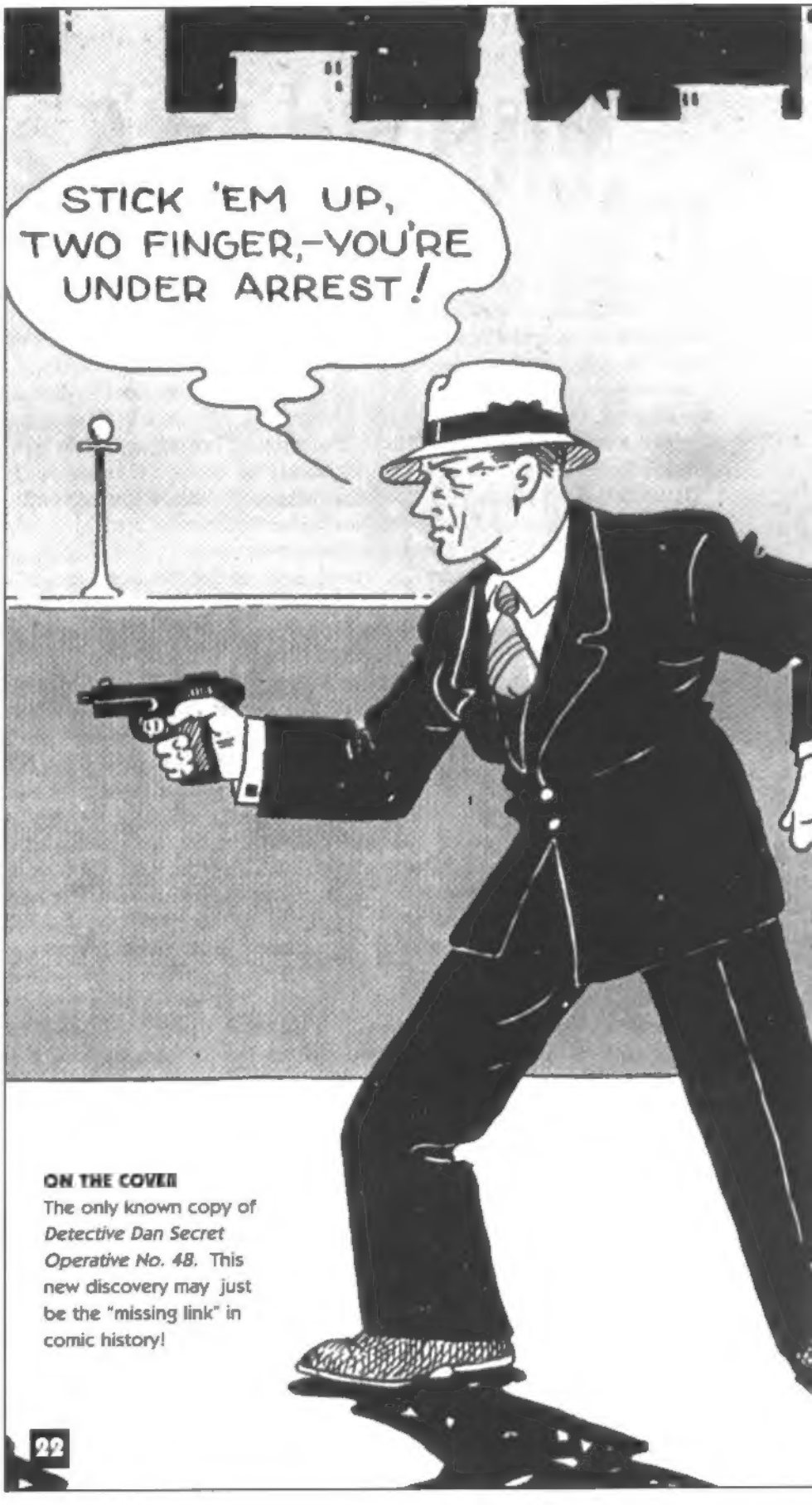

ON THE COVER
The only known copy of *Detective Dan Secret Operative No. 48.* This new discovery may just be the "missing link" in comic history!

MISSING LINK?

For years, most of us "armchair historians" have marked the comic history timeline with *The Funnies* (1929) then made the next significant entry at 1933 with "the first comic book" *Funnies On Parade*. But with the discovery of *Detective Dan* and *Ace King*, a new chapter in the development of the comic book can be written. It all started when Joel Frieman (of Argosy Publications) sent a package to Gemstone publisher Steve Geppi. Being an avid collector, Steve immediately recognized the information it contained as historic. He showed it to me a few months later and thus was born the idea of sharing it with *CBM* readers and fandom at large.

The implications of the *Detective Dan* and *Ace King* books are many and varied, and it would take a lengthy article to thoroughly discuss all of them. I would, however, like to touch on just five, in order to better communicate why I am so awed by the potential historical implications of this incredible discovery... and why I have affectionately dubbed it the "missing link" in comic history.

1) It seems clear that Siegel and Shuster were clearly influenced by *Detective Dan* and *Ace King*, as evidenced by the linked "oo" in the word "cartoon" on their *The Superman*, as it is on the cover of *Ace King*... and the design of the price circle on *The Superman*, which is quite similar in design the price circle on the cover of *Detective Dan*. Secondly, Siegel and Shuster had actually negotiated with representatives of Humor publishing and must have seen their publications (although the pair was ultimately disappointed when Humor pulled out of the deal.) In several interviews with the two Superman creators, they suggest (if not confirm) the influence of Humor's publications.

2) *Detective Dan* is shown in the 1942 article "No Laughing Matter" as part of the development of the medium. Sheldon Mayer (in his balloon at the lower corner of page one) describes a condensed "history of comics" and clearly mentions *Detective Dan*. He also provided it (albeit sans cover) along with *New Fun* and *New Comics* as one of the three representative examples of comic books. It seems clear that *Detective Dan* was viewed as an integral part of comic book development in 1942.

3) *Detective Dan*'s logo (most notably the word "Detective" in the title) and contents are similar in many respects to the later published *Detective Comics*. I believe that *Detective Dan* can be considered a "prototype" of sorts for *Detective Comics*.... especially when reviewing the cover styles and themes of issues 1-26!

4) *Detective Dan* appeared as a 1933 contemporary of the earliest comic book (Eastern Color's *Funnies On Parade*) but with one important difference! *Funnies On Parade* was given away as a premium... *Detective Dan* was sold at the newsstand for 10¢!!!! Clearly both of these 1933 publications contain key characteristics of the "modern" comic format.

5) In spite of its slightly larger size, I would argue that *Detective Dan* (along with *Ace King*) is clearly a comic book! Further, *Detective Dan* contains all original material, is dedicated to a single theme (that was not humor), was sold at the stands for 10¢, and predates all other books fulfilling these three criteria!!!

I believe this issue of *CBM* is a genuine milestone in our understanding of comic book history. But it does even more than enlighten us with unknown pieces of the comic history puzzle... it reminds us of the vast amount of knowledge [about our beloved medium] that we don't yet know... and how much documentation, study, and research there is left to do! It also challenges us to review the chronology of the American comic book as it is now generally understood, and to find a way of incorporating this important new information!

And now if you'll excuse me, I've just got to get back to work! So much history... so many comics... and so little time!

Gary

Gary M. Carter, Editor

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Kirby's "Hulk" Out West

It's been awhile since I've written in; so I just thought I'd let you know how much I enjoy CBM. After the years went by and you've been under Diamond's financial "wing", the magazine has lost none of its "mom & pop" charm. I'm glad that it still is a collector magazine supported almost entirely by collectors. There were a couple of ulterior motives for writing.

I was thumbing through a copy of Gunsmoke Western #63 (March 1961) the other day and I found a story by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Dick Ayers entitled: "The Hands of the Hulk". It's a pretty run-of-the-mill western about a barroom brawl between a big guy and Two-Gun Kid. The title itself is a giveaway, but here are some other compelling aspects of the characterization that lend credence to this story containing a prototype. First of all, he isn't just "big", he is—for lack of a better word—"hulking" compared to the other characters in the story.

1) This fellow's name is "Hulk Hogan" (I thought this—a possible if not likely stimulus for the most famous modern pro wrestler's name—was worthy of mention in itself. I wonder if he is/was an avid comic book reader.) but everyone—including the narrator—calls him "Hulk" or "The Hulk".

2) His grammar usage is very similar to that green-skinned guy. The first word that comes out of his mouth is "Bah!". Other words are "puny" and "weakling".

3) In one of the word balloons he refers to himself not in the typical first person, but in the third person: "The Two-Gun Kid ain't half the man Hulk Hogan is."

4) He is also incredibly strong and, adding to his subsequent downfall, incredibly dense. All of these factors coupled with the Kirby/Lee creative team make the resemblance to the Banner-Hulk too close for coincidence.

Interestingly, the date on this book is the same as Journey Into Mystery #66 (also March 1961), the 2nd appearance of Xemnu, "The Hulk". The first appearance of this character was in Journey into Mystery #62. In any case, there were definitely ideas abrewing at Marvel for the creation of the emerald giant who made his first appearance 14 months later.

On another note… I wanted to write in and ask if there were any folks out there who would be willing to pass some reader copies of funny animal or Archie/teen humor books my way. As a 2nd/3rd grade teacher, I like for my students to have a wide variety of literature available. They read picture books, poetry volumes, chapter books, and informational texts (like science or zoo magazines and encyclopedias). When we go to the school library, they take any opportunity to get on the illustrated encyclopedia CD-ROM. One of the main focuses for early literacy is encouraging reading for enjoyment. Most comic readers would agree that comic books are an excellent catalyst for this tendency.

I do have a few Archie and Disney treasury (pocket size) editions, but I was looking for more. I wanted to know if anybody out there would be willing to donate, any reading copies of these treasury editions or regular comic books of the Disney/Archie/Dennis the Menace genres (or anything else appropriate for kids). I tend to stay away from superhero stuff because the girls in my class seem to enjoy that less. I want to get and keep them all interested in reading for enjoyment. So if anybody has some freebie reading copies (of any era), there are 29 hungry readers in my classroom.

I'd be willing to cover postage costs, too. I promise that I won't set up a lemonade stand and sell them for 25¢ to anybody in my neighborhood, once I get them… and that they'll go right into the classroom to be used by my kids. My address is: P.O. Box 15112, San Diego, CA 92175-5112. I thank any kind donors in advance. Best,

Mick Rabin, California

I've seen Mick work with kids, and never was there a more dedicated, energetic, and kind instructor. I think the school system is mighty lucky he took up the profession. I've no doubt, Mick, that some CBM readers will ante-up with some reader copies for you! As for the Hulk out west… after seeing the panels, it's pretty clear to me that Gunsmoke Western #63 deserves some special attention in the Marvel timeline.

Young Men #24 Reminder

Would like to remind fandom about a very important book, Young Men #24 (which was mentioned in a fine article some years back in the Overstreet Guide #22). Young Men #24 has the return of Human Torch, Toro, Submariner, Captain America, Bucky, and the Red Skull after a four year absence from the stands! This book is scarce and undervalued!

Richard M. Brown, Michigan

I agree completely!

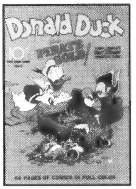
Bit Of Paradise!

Here's a trifle for Michel Maillot. This is the story Buscema refers to in the Les Daniels book. He told me about it back in 1977 or so when I spoke to him at my motel room down the hill from the El Cortez at the San Diego Con that year. (Please, please, please excuse the fact that the book isn't mint! I realize that this offends the collected conscience of assembled CBM-dom, with one Nolan-able exception.) The date on the book is November 1948.

If Michel is interested, I can provide the artistic path backwards from whatever point he becomes aware of Buscema's art: From Marvel to ACG to Dell to Atlas to Orbit to Dell to Timely.

John B. began in the Timely bullpen with John Severin, Russ Heath, Joe Maneely, Gene Colan, and other fledging comics giants. It was an interesting (albeit not artistically definitive) time. Styles were hidden in an assembly line process that wouldn't re-emerge for a decade. Try to imagine what it would be like to identify 1970's Marvel artists if they didn't provide credits. I sure wouldn't want to try it!

(2) As for my two cents on grades: refusing to accept a VG+ inbetween VG and FN is like saying that there isn't *(Continued on page 10)*



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a number between 5 and 7. You can deny it all you want, but I KNOW 6 is there. And since 6 is 5+1 and also 7-1, there is some grade that it can define. You've every right to think differently, but that doesn't change reality. Sorry. Put me on your panel in San Diego. I'll create havoc or some sane imitation thereof.

(3) On the Steranko issue (CBM #28): Jim proved once more that he is a magician. An entire issue without really saying anything! Oh it sounded slick and exciting, but we didn't learn a single concrete fact about his career that wasn't common knowledge. Smoke and mirrors! Well, okay, exceptionally well designed smoke and mirrors with brilliant flashes of distraction, but I still came away feeling singularly unenlightened and unsatisfied. I know it's a show biz axiom to leave 'em begging for more, but we've been waiting 25 years, fer cryin' out loud. When's he gonna deliver? Oh well, you can chalk it all up to Jim being cranky again. S'good thing I don't have time to write more often.

(4) God, I remember Barry Bauman's attic like it was yesterday! I hadn't thought of that bit of paradise for years. Thanks , Michelle, for bringing it all back. Peace

Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., California.

1) Thanks for the excellent John Buscema info, perhaps Michel Maillot or some other CBM reader will take you up on your generous offer.

2) I'm confused by your comments on grading. In-between (combination) "grades" are usually understood to be PR/FR, FR/GD, GD/VG, VG/FN, FN/VF, VF/NM, and NM/MT. I don't recall anyone suggesting that adding the plus and the minus to the eight standard grades was inappropriate. At any rate, I agree with your concept… I KNOW that 6 is there too! My contention is that the seven "combo grades" above are not only confusing to consumers and collectors, they actually only describe the "line" between grades and are not really a grade… thus the term "In Between grades." Further, I believe that they are often purposefully misused so that the term for the next higher grade can be "included" in a lower grade. My most commonly encountered example of this: VF/NM. I have seen numerous examples of VF books that were listed as VF/NM, only because the grader wanted to seduce a possible buyer with the term "NM" in the grade. I have also seen many less than competent graders use in between grades because the were unable to differentiate between two adjacent grades. "I can't tell if this book is GD or if its VG, so I'll just call it GD/VG!". Well enough on this controversial topic… I'm looking forward the 1st International Comic Book Grading Symposium at the SD Con this year. I've no doubt that this will be among the most hotly debated topics! See you there!

(Oh, just one more note about the Grading Symposium. My letter from the editor in CBM #34 neglected to credit Richard Holley with the idea of setting up and facilitating the Symposium. Richard deserves much of the credit and most of the thanks for making this event happen… Thanks Richard!)

3) I feel differently about the Steranko issue, I guess mainly because I did learn some new things I wasn't aware of before. Heck, I even enjoyed the smoke and mirrors! Sometimes you're allowed to be a little cranky when you're that good!

4) Although I never had the opportunity to visit Barry Bauman's famous attic, I did get to pal around with him a bit when he came down to the San Diego Cons in the seventies. I'll always remember the day at the '73 SD Con when he and Terry Stroud both bid for and won two great Banks paintings. The winning bids, as I recall, were $800-$900 per painting! Ah, those were the days…

Thanks for writing Jim, your letters are always straightforward and thought-provoking.

Ditko Dilemma

I have a question for all the Steve Ditko fans out there. In what comic was his first work published?

I recently purchased a copy of Black Magic #15 (Aug 1952). The last story, a seven page tale titled "Promised Land", has artwork that looks a lot like Steve Ditko's.

Last years (1995) annual price guide says that Black Magic #27 (Nov-Dec 1953) was Ditko's first published art but November's

update says that Daring Love (Sept/Oct 1953) is his first published work. Am I right in assuming that this particular fact hasn't been nailed down yet?

If anyone can confirm my suspicions about Black Magic #15 or find some other earlier possible Ditko stories it might prove enlightening for the rest of us. Keep up the good work

Chris Williams, Arkansas

Until I received your letter, I thought this Ditko Dilemma was pretty much cleared up, but now you've got me wondering. We need help from a real Ditko afficiando to sort this one out… can anyone help? Thanks for the encouragement, and the question, Chris.

Disenchanted Hobbyist

Well, my friend, I guess that's it for me. I'm out. This stuff is getting too rich for my blood. Although I've been a subscriber since issue #2 (1991-when a third class, twelve issue subscription cost only $12) I've come to the conclusion that sixty bucks for a magazine subscription is a bit much. Glossy paper and color or not.

I was peaked out at forty-eight, I'm not going to shell out an additional twelve. Funny, my income hasn't increased over the last few years, yet it seems the cost of living has. Time to make some cuts. In fact, over the last year or so, I've been tempted to drop the hobby altogether. Being that I've read and collected comic books for the last 38 years, this is a pretty difficult decision to make and adhere to.

The other day, I walked away with a purchase of three new comics at my local comic's store. I spent over nine dollars for those three little magazines. And ya' know, I can't say that I really enjoyed any of the three. Sheesh!

One last question before I wrap this up. Why is it that a subscriber who is willing to commit to twelve issues of your magazine, is not given a break over the regular newsstand price?

A disenchanted comic book hobbyist.

John P. Russell, Connecticut

I'm truly sorry to hear of your disenchantment, and especially that your upset with the present price of CBM.

Since Gemstone is associated with a distributor (Diamond), we comply with their policy of not competing with comic shops. This means that we must sell issues to the public for the same retail price the shops charge (our cover price). Our subscription service is just that… a SERVICE for those who can't find us at their local shop.

We prefer that you purchase CBM in stores because we actually (with our small west coast operation) lose money on every subscription issue… postage costs being the greatest villain. If a third class sub were possible (like the old days of CBM) we would certainly take advantage of it for your sake as well as ours. But the PO Dept. has increased third class postage so that it is exactly the same as first class in our weight range.

All of us in the hobby (including yours truly) struggle with ever-increasing costs. Puberty, marital difficulties, financial problems, College and Graduate school commitments, military obligations… all have taken their toll among our ranks. On the other hand, every single person I have ever known to leave the hobby regretted that decision.

Also, there are still thousands and thousands of issues that are fun and interesting to collect that don't cost much. From one 38 year "veteran" to another, I hope you'll reconsider.

Catman Down Under

A quick note to thank you for the latest CBM, another great issue. I just had two comments.

First, the Fantastic Four 1968 Big-Little Book shown on page 42 is not by Kirby. I bought a copy here in Britain at the time thinking it was Kirby, and indeed at least two of the illustrations are reproductions of Kirby comics panels. But all the rest are definitely by Herb Trimpe.

Secondly, concerning Catman, I was very intrigued to learn that Catman did not disappear with issue #32 in 1946. According to Phil Clarke and Mike Higgs' excellent book Nostalgia About Comics, published in Britain by Pegasus Publishing in 1991, Catman proved so popular in Australia, the publishers brought in local artists to creat[e] further new adventures. The book reproduces four covers and one interior page showing Catman with a boy sidekick, very influenced by Batman and Robin, in their huge catshead-shaped mountain stronghold, complete with "Catjet."

The late John Ryan, Australia's eminent comics historian, confirms in his book Panel To Panel that Frew Publications, still publishing the Australian Phantom comic to this day, has published under license some new Catman stories in Super Yank in 1951-52… and then in 1958 hired John Dixon, best known for his later "flying doctor" newspaper strip "Air Hawk."

(Continued on page 73)

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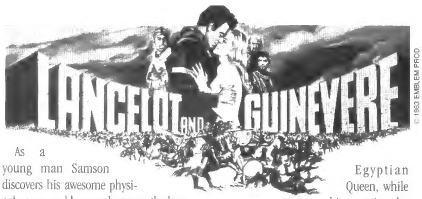
BY PAT S. CALHOUN

Perhaps the most powerful stories in all our mythic history are the great romances. From Adam and Eve to Bonnie and Clyde, various couples have come to represent the various destinations that a man and a woman can ride to on the tides of passion. Comic books have done their share- the relationship between Superman/Clark Kent and Lois Lane is as twisted as any of them! Here, however, we shall look at comic book "novelizations" of three classic love stories.

Who could resist the idea of Victor Fox, during his most salacious period- the post-war days when adult-oriented crime and romance flooded the stands- adapting a story from the Bible? Actually, though the comic doesn't say so, the most pertinent inspiration for *Samson And Delilah* (April 1950) came from the 1949 Cecil B. DeMille flick of the same name. The book is rather racy- the story does a remarkably good job telling of a man with superhuman strength and a femme fatale who falls in love too late to stop the results that spring from her betrayal of him.



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As a young man Samson discovers his awesome physical power, and he soon becomes the hero of his people- who are oppressed by the Philistines. But he falls in love with a Philistine woman. Under duress, Samson's bride-to-be extorts secrets from him that her people mock him with at his own wedding feast. Knowing she has crossed him, Samson spurns her, and Delilah- a dancer at the wedding feast- "picks him up on the rebound".

Delilah soon extracts from Samson his most important secret- that his super-strength can be nullified by a hair-cut. And comes the day when she does crop his locks; then the Philistines capture and blind him, and- well- most of you know the tale, but... The whole 29 pages is a captivating read, full of extraordinary sexual tension and characters that cast real shadows.

Harry Harrison, in an early 1970s interview published in *Graphic Story* #15, recalled that *Samson And Delilah* was produced in one of those famous 48-hour jam sessions, when a bunch of artists would simultaneously work on different parts of the script, which makes the seamless smoothness of the narrative all the more amazing. And the art is credible and consistent, totally able to carry the compelling story.

Stan Lee doing Shakespeare is almost as deliciously intriguing as Fox's Sunday school lesson. "Anthony and Cleopatra" (*Ideal Comics* #1, July-1948) was edited and maybe even written by Lee; certainly he was the guiding light of the company in the postwar years. Once again the romance is between people of vast political differences. This one is thick with intrigue- as first Julius Ceasar is won by the wiles of the Egyptian Queen, while his enemies plot his execution, and then Mark Anthony, Ceasar's friend, finds both revenge on Ceasar's killers and romance with Cleopatra.

Of course back in Rome, Octavian, who rules jointly with Anthony, takes advantage of Anthony's absence to turn public opinion against him to the point where soon an election is held making Octavian sole ruler. Anthony flees back to Egypt as Rome prepares a battle campaign against the African nation. But Mark Anthony's forces- plagued by mass defecting to the Roman side- are overcome, and a tragic fate closes in on the doomed lovers.

The story isn't incredibly intense, but it's entertaining. There's a superficial Marvel "house style" feel to both the writing and the art, but a lot of history gets

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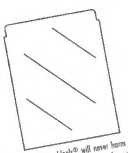

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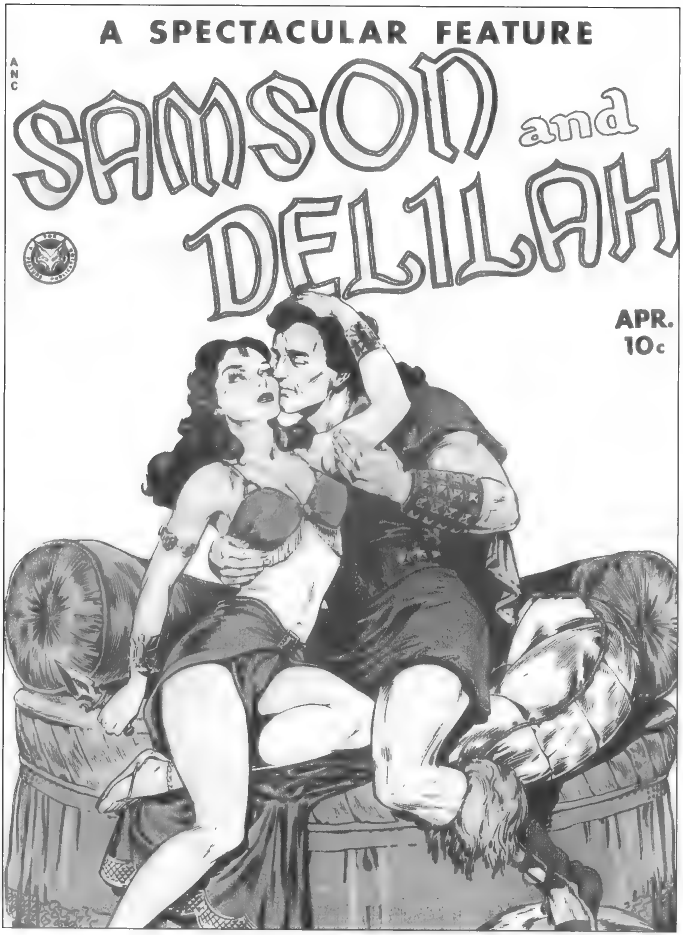
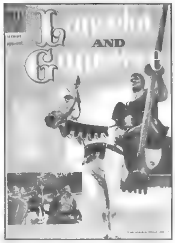

A SPECTACULAR FEATURE
ANC
SAMSON and DELILAH
APR.
10c

packed into 38 pages.

The third classic couples entry is more subdued than the other two, as would be expected from a post-Code book. Dell's "Lancelot and Guinevere" deals with the most unrequited of the three loves up for examination. A neighboring King responds to Arthur's request to marry his daughter with the proposal that the decision be made in trial by combat with chosen champions of each side, because he knows that such an alliance undercuts his own throne. And King Arthur accepts, selecting Lancelot as his champion. Lancelot triumphs in the ordeal, kindling a warm response in the now-betrothed Guinevere.



Again the poison of politics and plotting takes over, as Arthur's enemies play up the idea of a secret relationship between Queen and champion to create discord in the court. When Lancelot lets another knight wear his silver armor into battle, and that knight gets killed and led back to Camelot draped across his horse- Guinevere sees and thinks Lancelot dead. Her resulting fit of grief is more evidence against her in the schemes to divide the royal couple.

Lancelot knows that he should go back to his own castle for a while till things cool down, but wants to say goodbye to Guinevere. Spies observe their meeting in the Queen's tower and make the most of it, and Arthur becomes convinced of her infidelity. The price for such a transgression by a Queen is death by burning at the stake, but even as the flames rise Lancelot rides to her rescue. But the rescue, although it staves off death, can't promise any future life together, and the mismatched lovers must separate and suffer the further tragedies attendant upon the fall of Camelot.

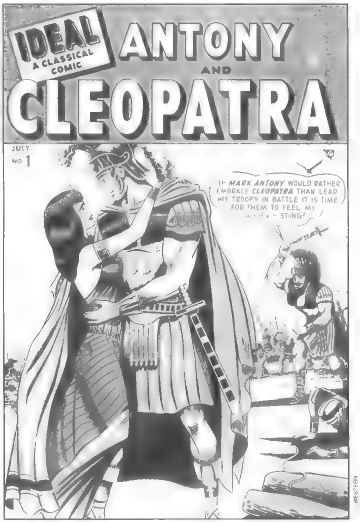
This book appeared as part of Dell's *Movie Classics* series (Issue #12-416-310, dated August/October 1963) and was adapted from the 1963 film of the same name. The treatment is tepid, with only some of the surpressed passions showing through, and the art is sufficient on the figure drawing but light on the background detail that is so important to historical settings. The story is done without any supernatural elements. Merlin is counsel to the King but not a wizard. It's a solid if not spectacular effort: the restrained mood is a valid interpretation of the Arthurian myth- with storms seething beneath cool surfaces. And Dell's cover to cover 32-page uninterrupted novel format is pleasing as always

None of the three couples here achieved anything like a happy ending, but their loves will live forever, as long as stories are told. ■

On the cover of SAMSON & DELILAH (Apr 1950), the biblically famous femme fatale plots the downfall of her historic "superman", clutching a dagger as she caresses his curly locks.

An esoteric post Golden Age comic from Timely, IDEAL COMICS #1 (Jul 1948) features "Anthony and Cleopatra". Later issues of the short lived title would showcase other historical/literary figures, including "Joan of Arc" (issue #3) and "King Richard the Lion Hearted" (issue #4).

Lancelot on horseback dominates the cover of Dell MOVIE CLASSICS #12-416-310 (Aug/Oct 1963). Guinevere is relegated to the back cover in an adaptation of the movie poster.


IDEAL
A CLASSICAL COMIC
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AND
CLEOPATRA
JULY
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IF MARK ANTONY WOULD RATHER EMBRACE CLEOPATRA THAN LEAD HIS TROOPS IN BATTLE IT IS TIME FOR THEM TO FEEL MY STING!

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These comics remain among the ultimate pieces of mid-century Americana... yet strangely, they are among the least appreciated and least expensive of all such treasures... even though all of them are considerably harder to locate than much pricier baseball cards featuring the same American icons!

By Michelle Nolan

Catching Baseball Comic Fever!

PLAYING HARDBALL WITH TRUE COMIC COLLECTIBLES

TO STEAL A LINE FROM THE TELEVISION announcer so many of us have known and loved, "Baseball is a Funny Book Game."

Or at least it was a magical time in the late 1940's and early 1950s, when Joe Garagiola was still in the depths of a mediocre playing career but both comic books and baseball were at the height of their popularity

It's often been said (though seldom in the same sentence) that baseball and comic books are among the few original cultural contributions from American civilization. Indeed, both forms of art (and baseball is indeed an athletic art) were more often than not looked down upon in their early years as so much "pop-culture trash" for the uneducated masses.

But by the middle of the century—when newsstand comic books were nearly two decades old and major league baseball as we know it was about 50 years old—the perfect synthesis occurred in the form of Fawcett's beautiful biographical comics about several now legendary diamond heroes

Even if baseball isn't in your blood, these comics remain among the ultimate pieces of mid-century Americana. Yet strangely, they are among the least appreciated and least expensive of all such treasures, even though all of them are considerably harder to locate than much pricier baseball cards featuring the same American icons.

That's not hard to explain, of course. Baseball cards represent the epitome of nostalgia for the game, while baseball comics are just another little-known genre in a smaller hobby than card collecting. Even half-century old baseball cards are far more available to collectors than comics from the same era, especially in high grade. It's true that many of those cards met their ultimate fate on bicycle spokes, but not many were bent back by readers, left on the bathroom floor, or folded into back pockets.

Fawcett published 16 baseball comics from 1949-52, and each is a little gem. None of them seems genuinely scarce (I hesitate to use the word "rare" in connection with a 1950 era Fawcett comic, because they had such extensive distribution), but they're all fairly uncommon (again, especially in grade). I would say they are all considerably scarcer than the much more popular Fawcett western, romance, and Marvel Family comics of the same era.

It's a genuine collecting challenge to complete a set of all 16. I can well remember squeaking with delight at a sports nostalgia convention a few years ago, when I not only found the last Fawcett baseball comic I needed—the tough to find the *Phil Rizzuto* one-shot from 1951—but moments later got to shake hands with both Mohammad Ali and Bob Gibson. A baseball card dealer sold me the Rizzuto (in solid "good" condition) for $6! Only the year before at the San Diego Comic Con, I had been disappointed when a dealer told me he had already sold a Rizzuto for seven or eight times that... an amount I would have gladly paid for even a semi-decent copy.

Before going on about the glories of their Fawcett times, it should be noted that baseball biographical comics represent a truly

tiny niche in comic collecting. The life stories of dozens of baseball stars, both past and present, were detailed in 1940s titles like *Real Fact, True Comics,* and *Real Life Comics,* and a few collectors seek out those issues. But sports comics in general (and baseball biographies in particular) were not common.

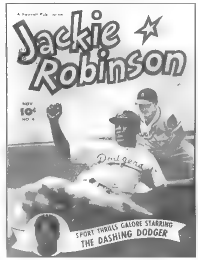
Longtime *Marketplace* readers may recall my article on collecting sports comics in the old *CBM* (#19, November 1992). I confined my definition to comics devoted to traditional team and individual sports (in other words, I left the hot rod comics at the starting line), pointing out that only some 120 fact-based newsstand sports comics were published from 1940-54. After that, they virtually disappeared... except for a few one-shots and giveaways until coming back a few years ago, surely in response to the card-collecting craze of the time. (A few of the recent sports comics, such as Magnum's two issue *Mickey Mantle* comics, were well done but most of them were filled with so many errors and such poor writing that they, regrettably, weren't worth either buying or collecting in my opinion.)

TUCKER BOOTHSON
It's fitting that the first black to play modern major league baseball had a six-issue run. This issue (#4, Nov 1950) is especially difficult to locate.

A checklist of 1940-70 sports comics, both factual and fictional, accompanied the article, and a few attentive readers made a point to tell me how few comics were devoted to individual sports heroes. Most were anthologies, which was no surprise, considering that anthology comics of all types were the rule rather than the exception during the 1940's and 50's.

Indeed, other than the 18 issues from Fawcett (also including two issues devoted to boxer Joe Louis), there were only two other biographical sports comics, so let's look at those two issues before hitting the field with our Fawcett favorites.

Here I must admit a bias. It just so happens that these two independent issues, *The Amazing Willie Mays* from Famous Funnies Publications in 1954 and *The Pride of the Yankees* from Magazine Enterprises in 1949, tell the life stories of two of my three favorite players—the incomparable Mays and Lou Gehrig. Mays was my favorite player while growing up in a baseball-loving family, and Gehrig was the player I most respected from the past. (It will doubtless come as no surprise that my current favorite is Baltimore Orioles star Cal Ripken, who last year broke Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130 consecutive games played.)



The Amazing Willie Mays was distributed late in the 1954 season from the same folk who published *Famous Funnies,* which was the first modern newsstand comic book and had recently passed its 200th issue. The intent was obviously to capitalize on the fabulous season being enjoyed by the "Say Hey Kid" and the New York Giants, who went on to win the National League pennant and the World Series.

I'm not sure who drew the four stories about Willie, whose career was detailed through July of 1954. He came up to the majors early in the 1951 season but spent most of 1952 and all of 1953 in the Army, so he really didn't become a household name with baseball fans until 1954. He was the National Leagues Rookie of the Year in 1951, but his .274 batting average and 20 home runs only hinted at what an incredibly productive and charismatic Hall of Fame career he would enjoy until he played his last game (with the New York Mets in the 1973 World Series).

Although some say Babe Ruth remains the greatest player in history because of his success both as a pitcher (early in his career) and as a slugger, for my money Mays was the best of all time (and Willie got a lot of my money because I spent many enchanted hours watching him play in San Francisco). I've never seen a player who not only hustled every second of every game and had amazing charisma, but also combined the five basic skills of baseball the way Willie did—hit for consistency, hit for power, run, throw, and field.

The Pride of the Yankees has a beautiful photo cover with a white and blue background. My guess is that it was

FAWCETT SPORTS COMICS

Jackie Robinson
#1 1949
#2 Jul 1950
#3 Sep 1950
#4 Nov 1950
#5 1951
#6 1952

Joe Louis
#1 Sep 1950
#2 Nov 1950

Ralph Kiner
1950 one-shot

Don Newcombe
1950 one shot

Roy Campanella
1950 one-shot

Larry Doby
1950 one shot

Yogi Berra
1951 one-shot

Phil Rizzuto
1951 one-shot

Eddie Stanky
1951 one shot

Thrilling True Story of the Baseball-Yankees
1952 one-shot

Thrilling True Story of the Baseball-Giants
1952 one-shot

Baseball Heroes
1952 one-shot, Hall of Fame story

published to take advantage of the re-release of the wonderful 1942 Goldwyn film of the same name… starring Gary Cooper as the New York Yankees' ill-fated "Iron Horse." This is still the best baseball movie of all time, at least in my book, and I still cry every time I see it. (If you can watch this marvelous film and not shed at least a tear or two, you're made of stone.)

The Pride of the Yankees is distinguished by a comic book rarity of the period—both writer Gardner Fox (yes, THE Gardner Fox) and artist Ogden Whitney received credit on the splash page. It's well drawn and well told. Oddly, Fox had Gehrig saying he considered himself "one of the luckiest guys in the world" instead of the correct "the luckiest man in the world" during his famous speech at Yankee Stadium on July 4th, 1939, a couple of months after his fatal illness forced him to leave the lineup.

Back to the Fawcett titles… they are real gems, and most have beautiful full-color back covers and black-and-white inside photo covers. They have great crossover-collector appeal because they feature several of the greatest early black major leaguers: They showcase Jackie Robinson, Don Newcombe, and Roy Campanella of the Brooklyn Dodgers… and Larry Doby of the Cleveland Indians. As most are aware, Robinson was the first black player in modern major league baseball, breaking the color line in 1947, and Doby came up to the Indians late that season as the first black in the American League

The other Fawcett comics featured Pittsburgh Pirates slugger Ralph Kiner, New York Giants second baseman Eddie Stanky, Yankees catcher Yogi Berra, and Yankees shortstop Rizzuto. Robinson was the first player profiled, beginning with a 1949 issue, and the only one (except for boxer Joe Louis) with more than one issue. There were three more Robinson issues in 1950, one in 1951, and one in 1952.

These Fawcett biographical comics may have been disappointing sellers, because the company abruptly switched focus in 1952 for its last three baseball comics. Two were *The Thrilling True Story of the Baseball - Giants and The Thrilling True Story of the Baseball - Yankees*, both celebrating the immortal teams that met in the 1951 World Series. The last was *Baseball Heroes*, which includes brief sketches of all the players then in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York (the Hall opened only 13 years earlier, and only a relative handful of Americans had visited).

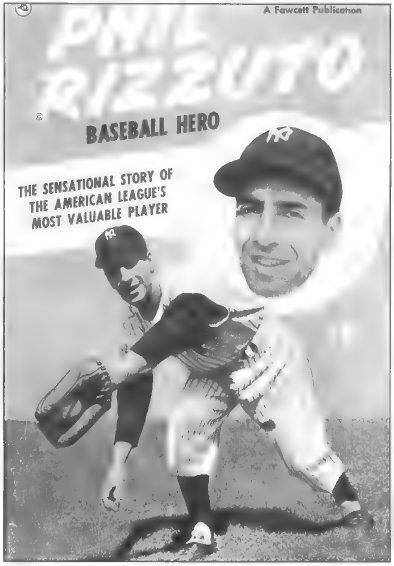
During 1953, Fawcett's final year as a comic book publisher (its last issues were dated January 1954), it did not publish any sports comics, so obviously these were not big sellers That accounts for their scarcity. The publication of the comics about the black stars may not seem noteworthy today, but it probably represented a considerable financial gamble at the time. After all, several major league teams did not have any African-American players (the Yankees didn't have one until 1955, when Elston Howard joined the team, and the Red Sox were the last to integrate their team, when infielder Pumpsie Green joined them in 1959)

There were only a handful of newsstand comics directed towards blacks, including Fawcett's three issues of *Negro Romance* in 1950. Interestingly, the 1950 Larry Doby and Roy Campanella one-shots have an advertisement for paperback books on the inside back covers for "Great Negro Novels in Signet Editions," including books by the famed black authors Richard Wright and Chester Himes, among others. *Jackie Robinson* #3 (September 1950) and *Joe Louis* #2 (November 1950) have the same ad, but none of the other one-shots about white players carry that ad. Nor do any of the other Robinson issues… or Joe Louis #1. Fawcett may have ultimately considered that ad a conflict of interest with its burgeoning Gold Medal Books, soon became a popular line of original paperback novels. (Fawcett began publishing Gold Medal novels in 1950.)

The *Larry Doby* one-shot was beautifully drawn by Bill

ROY CAMPANELLA (FOLLOWING PAGE) This is one of 11 Fawcett issues devoted to black sports heroes, so is of crossover collector interest.

PHIL RIZZUTO The famed "Scooter" of the Yankees is tough to find.



THE AMAZING WILLIE MAYS
This comic profiled Willie's career and his season through July, 1954. It hit the stands in September to take advantage of the enthusiasm over Willie's great year. Note the sketch of Willie's trademark "basket catch." Little leaguers (and aging softball players), don't try this!

Ward (the only Fawcett sports issue he did; does anyone know of any other Ward work for Fawcett?). It was credited to Charles Dexter, a writer with whom I am otherwise totally unfamiliar and who received most of the other credits in the Fawcett baseball series. I am familiar with most of the great sports writers of the period, and I've never heard of him in that context, either.

PHOTO BY NOLAN

Kurt Schaffenberger, who did so much wonderfully whimsical work on Captain Marvel Junior for Fawcett, nicely rendered the *Yogi Berra* one-shot, although he has so far not received any recognition for it. It's fun to see Schaffenberger on a subject he normally didn't handle.

The art on the other Fawcett sports comics is not exceptional, although every one of them is done with the professional polish so typical of that company, with work by the likes of Ed Ashe and Clem Weisbecker. The art depicting African-Americans is especially noteworthy . . . being devoid of the racial stereotypes still otherwise prevalent in the publications of several other companies at the time.

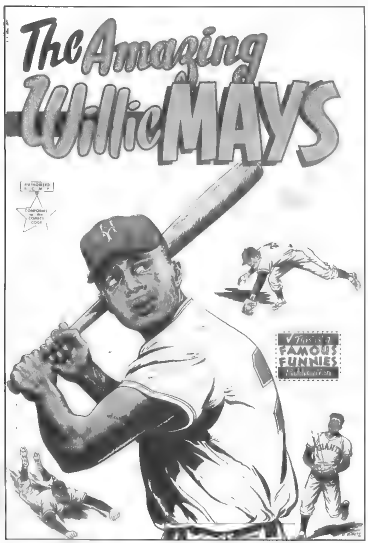
It's also noteworthy that these comics are, by and large, unusually accurate, with almost no historical errors. Whoever wrote them (I'm not even sure whether Dexter is a pen name) did painstaking research, unlike some of the "total trash" of recent years (which was riddled with errors). The grammar and spelling is almost always perfect, as well. All in all, any school teacher could have used a Fawcett sports comic as a valuable instructional tool.

These comics are wonderfully evocative of the era, a period when baseball was in full flower. The major leagues had not yet begun the painful process of expansion; there were only eight teams in the major leagues throughout the 1950's. And every team had at least ten minor league clubs, so making the major leagues was difficult indeed, especially after the infusion of the first and second waves of great black talent.

Because blacks were not allowed in 20th century major league baseball until 1947, the game probably reached its peak in the late 1950s and '60s, before the second wave of expansion in the late '60's. Look at the all-star rosters of those years and compare them with today's overall talent, not just a handful of hitters like Frank Thomas San Francisco's Barry Bonds is considered a superstar today, but many players matched his best statistics many times over during baseballs own Golden Age.

One can still obtain these comics for $30-100 in the good to very good range, so they're definitely better bargains than the baseball cards of the same superstars. It's difficult to say which comics are the scarcest, though my nominations would be *Jackie Robinson* #4 and the *Phil Rizzuto* one-shot. They were the last issues I found, but that doesn't always mean they're the scarcest. However, when you scour thousands of boxes and pricelists every year, you do get a feel for what is legitimately tough to find.

The prices of these comics have doubled or tripled in the past five years, so collectors definitely have begun to appreciate their beauty. Baseball comic fever—catch it or you might find yourself making an error! ■



Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950's comic books in the United States. In real life Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

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Comic Strip Magazines Constitute an Industry as young as its patrons

No Laughing Matter

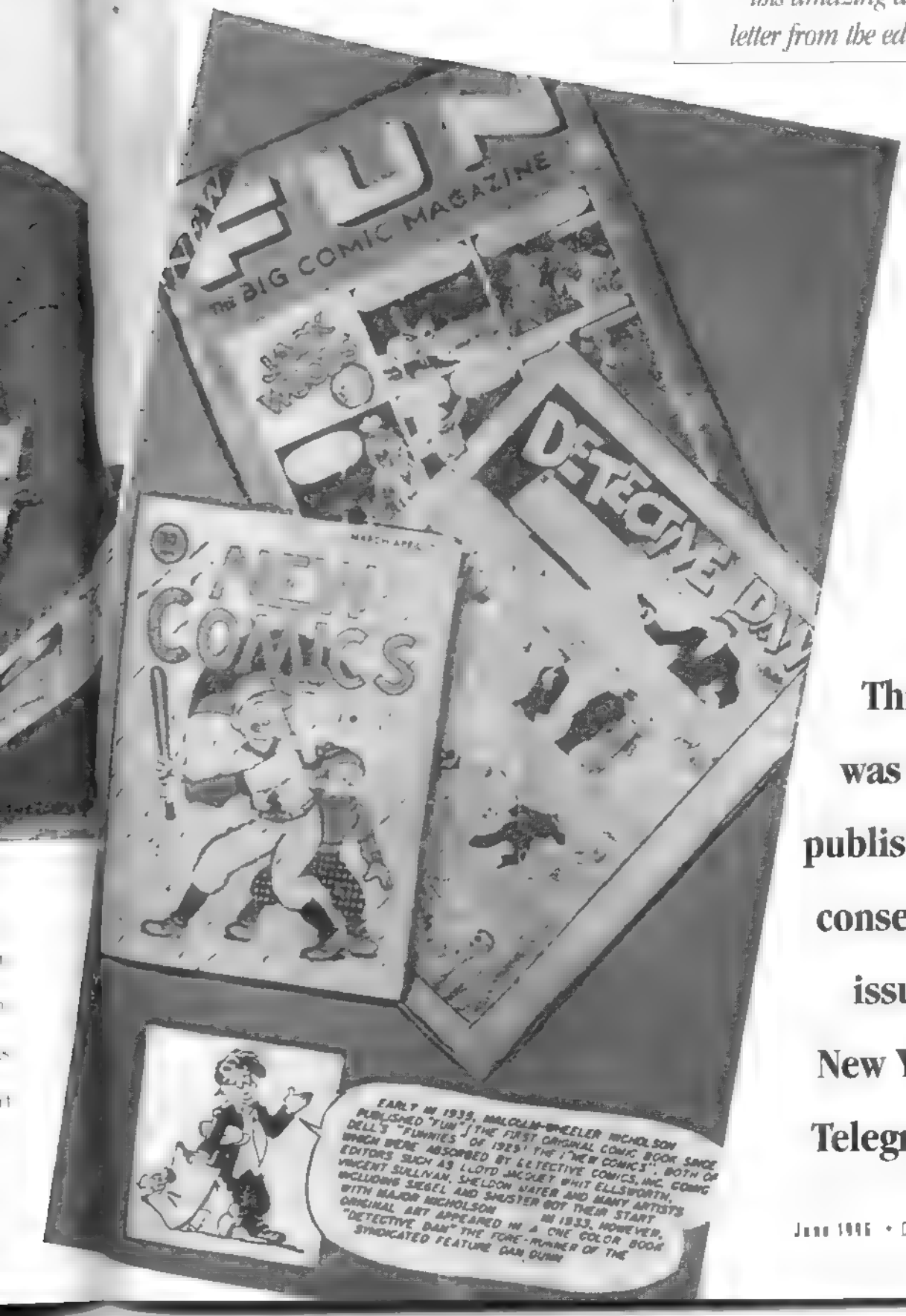
LEFT TO RIGHT Funnies Inc. president and comic book pioneer Lloyd Jacquet discusses a Golden Age story with Frank Torpey and Ray Gill. Jacque was also the editor of *New Fun Comics*.

By Douglas Gilbert Staff Writer

In 1940 the newsstands carried 168 comic strip magazines at their peak. Today the display is about 100. The decline is unimportant for the circulation is about the same—12,000,000 to 15,000,000 monthly, 150,000,000 a year. Just shows juvenile taste and discrimination. At 10¢ a copy, the publishers derive from this circulation an annual revenue of $15,000,000, about 7½ percent of it school kid's dimes. Each magazine averages four readers-Mary and John and often Mama and Papa—or 50,000,000 readers a month.

The figures are approximate because this

For background and perspective on this amazing article, see the letter from the editor on page 6.


THE BIG COMIC MAGAZINE
DETECTIVE DAN
NEW COMICS
EARLY IN 1935, MALCOLM-WHEELER NICHOLSON PUBLISHED "FUN" THE FIRST ORIGINAL COMIC BOOK SINCE DELL'S "FUNNIES OF 1929" THE "NEW COMICS", BOTH OF WHICH WERE ABSORBED BY DETECTIVE COMICS, INC. COMIC EDITORS SUCH AS LLOYD JACQUET WHIT ELLSWORTH, VINCENT SULLIVAN, SHELDON MAYER AND MANY ARTISTS INCLUDING SIEGEL AND SHUSTER GOT THEIR START WITH MAJOR NICHOLSON IN 1933, HOWEVER, ORIGINAL ART APPEARED IN A ONE COLOR BOOK "DETECTIVE DAN" THE FORE-RUNNER OF THE SYNDICATED FEATURE DAN DUNN

This article was originally published in three consecutive daily issues of the New York World-Telegram (1942).

industry is as young as its readers. It is still hit or miss, and precise totals, except for the number of titles, are unobtainable. But they are near enough, and they are "red meat" to [illegible] with academic appetites.

Few Bouquets

[illegible] poisoned mushroom growth. That crack [illegible] applied by Sterling North in an editorial in the *Chicago Daily News*, May 8, 1940, and it led to the creation of *Parents' Magazine* by Dorothy Jacobs Bendix, head of Parents Institute, a comic strip factory and idea house at 49 W. 45th St. which submitted it to George Hecht for publication.

It portrays in pictured strips the lives of real people (Winston Churchill was the first and is successful. It got every possible break. Hecht's publishes the *Parents' Magazine* and a school trade newspaper marketed through agents in schools throughout the country. Even Canada permits its entry on an educational basis. *True Comics* circulation in Canada is about 90,000 and [illegible] publishers who enjoy no such favor are still [illegible].

RULES OF THE CONTEST

1. Solutions must not be more than 500 words.
2. State by whom the murders were committed and the motives.
3. Write your name and address plainly at the top of your solution. (You may use pen, pencil or typewriter. Legibility may help you win a prize.)
4. Awards will be made to those who in the opinion of the judges give in the least number of words, the best solutions, explaining in detail how the crimes were committed, by whom, and what the motives were.
5. The publishers of DETECTIVE DAN will appoint the judges and their decision will be final.
6. No correspondence will be entered into relative to this contest on the part of the publishers other than the mailing of checks to the prize winners.
7. Winners will be announced in a later issue of DETECTIVE DAN.
8. No employe or relative of an employe of the publishers will be permitted to enter in this contest.
9. Solutions must be mailed not later than midnight, July 1st, 1933, addressed as follows:

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Second Prize $10.00 Third Prize $5.00

10 PRIZES $2.00 each ‖ **15 PRIZES $1.00 each**

28 CASH AWARDS 28

Detective Dan, Secret Operative No. 48 featured a contest for young sleuths. On page 27, the nine "Rules of the Contest" were listed. Note the awkward wording of Rule #7 and the date (July 1, 1933) mentioned in Rule #9.

A number of [illegible] joined along with North. But the [illegible] respectable references. They see [illegible] expressions affecting [illegible]

[illegible] best answer to the attacks of the strips was written by an unknown editorial writer on the [illegible] *Daily News*. He painted a lovely picture [illegible] publishers except Hecht cheered.

[illegible] week later he wrote his champion of the strip, "This newspaper gets literature promoting whole some magazine comics to wean the younger away from lurid picture magazines portraying murder, mayhem, thievery, conspiracy, intrigue, cannibalism, barratry, malfeasance, nonfeasance, and felonius assault."

The promoters would like to have us say something pretty about the 'wholesome' magazines, which offer the lives of real heroes,' supposedly as laden with deeds of inspiration and derring-do as the best efforts of Superman.

Some [illegible] react. This writer in his [illegible] grew fat on a diet of scalps, knives in the back, Indians biting the dust, blood-curdling screams at midnight, slinking and sinister Chinamen, haunted houses a-clank with chains and all the other paraphernalia of the old-time thriller which certainly needs take no back seat for Buck Rogers or The Phantom.

The leading selection in the current wholesome offering is a pictorial life of Franklin D. Roosevelt. We have a good deal of respect for FDR but Mr. Roosevelt can't leap a thousand feet into the air and bring down a warplane with his bare fists. Superman can."

"Comic" Not the Word

The comic book industry is a fantastic piece of Americana. Aside from its social and cultural implications which are appalling, its rise and development [illegible] coincidentals with the satanic ascendency of Hitler is a chapter as mixed the arts product.

The magazine strip published today has no relation to the wham-pop-zowie school and technique of yesterday. It differs too from the daily newspaper strips which are more adult. Adult as a daily strip is the magazine publishers of all their strips and there are some 400 hero characters in comics. Superman has been syndicated to 11 New York newspapers.

Very few of the magazine strips are comic. Indeed the publishers are ticked by the word and would gladly chuck it. Not long ago one of them posted a financial reward for anyone who could coin a substitute accurately describing its product. No one could. Even Terror Strip and the offer was withdrawn. Actually the magazine strip is a pictorial dime novel: it tells weird stories in symbols. It is the renaissance of the stone-slab era.

The magazine comic as it appears today is eight years old. Its origin was chance. It's start a failure. The first four color comic newsstand publication was put out in 1929 by George Delacorte, head of the Dell Publishing Co. Delacorte called it *The Funnies* but there was so much in it to ridicule. It folded after 13 issues. And it was not the strip as published today.

Then everybody forgot the strip for four years and the kids had a good time studying their lessons and playing safe at ball. In 1933 Eastern Color Printing Co. (Waterbury, Conn.) ob, and an unsung printer, fooling with the plates, happened to notice that two of them were the exact size of a tabloid newspaper page, which, when folded, made a book

Finally... Real Circulation Data

ALL AMERICAN COMICS GROUP (6)

Published by J. S. Publishing Co. Inc.
460 Lexington Ave. New York City

Comprised of

All American Comics	Flash Comics
Sensation Comics	

Rates effective January, 1942. Issues. (Card No. 7.)
Agency commission 15%; cash discount 2%—10 days from date of invoice. Billing date 15th of 2nd month preceding date of issue.

General Advertising
Rates include insertion of same copy in all publications.

Agate line	1 50
1 page	495 00
1/2 page	330 00
1/2 page	247 50
1 column	170 00
1 inch	21 00
Special strip at bottom of inside comic pages	
2 inches deep by 6 1/2 inches	132 00
2 3/4 inches deep by 6 1/2 inches	165 00

Covers—Non-cancellable

1st cover	No advertising
2nd cover (1 color)	550 00
3rd cover (1 color)	550 00
4th cover (2, 3 or 4 colors)	650 00

Colors
No added charge for two, three or four colors on advertisements over two inches run on inside pages.

Other Special Positions—Non-cancellable
Center spread 825.00

Contract and Copy Requirements
All copy subject to approval of publishers

Minimum Depth, R.O.P. Advertisements
Minimum space 14 lines.

Mechanical Requirements
Pages are 3 columns wide by 128 lines deep, 378 lines to the page

1 page	6 1/2" x 9"
2 columns	4-1/4" x 9"
1 column	2" x 9"
2nd and 3rd covers	6 1/2" x 9"
4th cover (bleed)	7 1/2" x 10-1/4"

No plates required. Publishers make own engravings at no cost to advertiser provided they are supplied with complete black and white layout including all illustrations and type matter pasted up in proper place. Otherwise a service charge will be made. Engravings are made in line or dot-etch process, hence best results are secured from black and white line drawings. However black and white halftones can be used (65 screen inside, 120 screen on covers) in which case original photo should be included with complete pasted up black and white layout. When color is desired it must be indicated on tissue overlay. Two, three or four colors available without cost to advertiser when line drawings used. Color matching not guaranteed unless advertiser supplies plates. No color possible in illustrations when halftones are used.

Printing not guaranteed when type less than 6 point size is used

Issuances and Closing Dates
Published bimonthly, dated All American Comics, [illegible] Flash Comics 12th of the preceding month, Sensation Comics, 8th of 2nd preceding month.
Inside pages close 20th of 4th month preceding date of issue
Covers close 15th of 4th month preceding date of issue
To obtain proofs for revision copy must reach publisher ten days before closing date. No proofs on inside pages.
Cancellations cannot be accepted after 30th day preceding closing date of issue. All orders for cover positions and center spreads are positively non-cancelable.

Representatives
New York—Combined Publishers Representatives, Inc.
Chicago—Harley L. Ward

CIRCULATION—A.B.C. 6-30-42

Single copy .10	
Total net paid exc. bulk (6 mos. ave.)	821,221
Total net paid including bulk (6 mos. ave.)	[illegible]
Average issue [illegible]	
Net paid as of February [illegible]	
Mail subscribers [illegible]	[illegible]

Rate card effective January, 1943, issues shows A.B.C. guaranteed net paid average of 650,000 for year. Issues backed.

SUPERMAN (4)

Published by Superman, Inc.
460 Lexington Ave., New York City

Rates effective January 5, 1942, Issue No. 15. (Card No. 7.)

Agency commission 15%; cash discount 2%—10 days from date of invoice. Billing date same as on-sale date

General Advertising

1 page	800.00
2-3 page (bathamats only)	650.00
1/2 page	495.00
1 column	245.00
1 inch	30.00
Agate line	2.75
Special strip at bottom of inside comic pages	
2 inches deep by 6 1/2 inches	225.00
2-3/4 inches deep by 6-1/2 inches	325.00

Covers—Non-cancellable

1st cover	No advertising
2nd cover (1 color)	975.00
3rd cover (1 color)	975.00
4th cover (2, 3 or 4 colors)	1,150.00

Colors
No added charge for 2, 3 or 4 colors on advertisements over two inches run on inside pages.

Other Special Positions—Non-cancellable
Center spread 1,700.00

Contract and Copy Requirements
All copy subject to approval of publishers.

Minimum Depth, R.O.P. Advertisements
Minimum space one inch.

Mechanical Requirements
Pages are 3 columns wide by 128 lines deep; 378 lines to the page.

1 page	6-1/2" x 9"
2 columns	4-1/4" x 9"
1 column	2" x 9"
2nd and 3rd covers	6-1 2" x 9"
4th cover (bleed)	7-1 2" x 10-1/4"

No plates required. Publishers make own engravings at no cost to advertiser provided they are supplied with complete black and white layout including all illustrations and type matter pasted up in proper place. Otherwise a service charge will be made. Engravings are made in line or dot-etch process, hence best printing results secured from black and white line drawings. However black and white halftones can be used (65 screen inside, 120 screen on covers) in which case original photo should be included with complete pasted up black and white layout. When color is desired it must be indicated on tissue overlay.
Two, three or four colors available without cost to advertiser when line drawings used. Color matching not guaranteed unless advertiser supplies plates. No color possible in illustrations when halftones are used. Printing not guaranteed when type less than 6 point size is used.

Issuances and Closing Dates
Published bimonthly.

Issue	Issuance Dates	Closing Dates
No. 14	January 5th	October 25th
No. 15	March 5th	December 25th
No. 16	May 5th	February 25th
No. 17	July 5th	April 25th

To obtain proofs for revision copy must reach publisher ten days before closing date.
Cancellations cannot be accepted after the 30th day preceding closing date of issue. All orders for cover positions and center spreads are positively non-cancelable.

Representatives
New York—Combined Publishers Representatives, Inc.
Chicago—Harley L. Ward

CIRCULATION—Sworn 12-31-41

Established 1939. Single copy 10 per year 15.	
Total net paid (6 months average)	1,186,082
Total distribution (6 months average)	1,186,722
Maximum rate 2.25; Minimum rate 1.95.	

Rate card effective January 5, 1942 (Issue No. 151), shows guaranteed net paid average of 1,100,000 for year. Rebate backed.

MARVEL COMIC GROUP (6)

330 W. 42nd St., New York City

Monthly groups issued from the following

Marvel Mystery Comics	Young Allies (Sentry)
The Human Torch	Joker Comics
Sub-Mariner Comics	Comedy Comics
Captain America Comics	Krazy Comics
All-Winners Comics	Terry Toons

Rates effective March, 1942, issues. (Card No. 1.)
Agency commission 15%; cash discount 2%—10 days.

General Advertising
Publisher accepts the magazines to comprise the monthly group.
Advertising and key numbers must be identical for each magazine comprising a group

1 page (128 lines)	900 00
1/2 page (64 lines by 2 columns)	450 00
1 column (128 lines)	300 00
Agate line	2.25

Covers—Non-cancellable

1st cover	No advertising
2nd cover	850 00
3rd cover	850 00
4th cover (4 colors)	1,350.00

Colors
No extra charge for color on inside pages when one or more columns are used

Bleed Pages
No bleed on inside pages or covers accepted.

Other Special Positions
Advertising for center spread accepted by special arrangement.

Classified
None

Reading Notices
Not accepted

Contract and Copy Requirements
All copy subject to publisher's approval

Mechanical Requirements
Pages are 3 columns wide by 128 lines deep, 384 lines to the page.

1 page	6-1/4" x 9-9/16"
1/2 page	6-1/4" x 4-9/16"
1 column	2-, 4" x 9 3 16"
4th cover (no bleed)	6 1/2" x 9-1/2"

Halftones for inside pages 65 screen, covers 120 screen.
All advertising copy must be pasted up in glossy proofs for reproduction unless line cuts are furnished. For 2 color ads tissue overlay should be attached showing colors desired. No color in halftone illustrations. Color matching not guaranteed unless advertiser supplies original plates. For satisfactory reproduction of type matter, no less than 6 point size can be used

Issuances and Closing Dates
Publisher accepts the magazines to comprise the monthly group
Published monthly. On sale between 5th and 10th of 2nd month preceding date of issue
Inside pages close 1st of 4th month preceding date of issue
Covers close 5th of 3rd month preceding date of issue

Representatives
New York—Jesse Rosen
Chicago—William H. Stewart.

CIRCULATION
Rate card states
1,250,000 net paid guaranteed monthly circulation.

AMAZING COMIC BOOK RATE CARDS

The rate cards pictured here are also part of the historic Joel Frieman package. They are apparently the source of much of the circulation data used in the memo shown on pages 34 and 35. Original rate cards can provide a wealth of information, including:

1. Publishes name, 2. Publishes address, 3. Date rate card issued ("card received date), 4. Date rate card ceased to apply (effective date), 5. How many times the rate card as been updated (rate card number), 6. The one time cost of the inside front cover ad (cover 2), 7. The one time cost of the inside back cover ad (cover 3), 8. The one time cost of the back cover ad (cover 4), 9. The type of printing used on cover stock (If the front and back covers are full color, but the inside front cover and inside back covers are in black & white, they are described in printers jargon as "4-over-1"... or four colors on the top over one color (usually black) on the bottom. If all four covers are in full color, they are described in printers jargon as 4-over-4... or four colors on the top over four colors on the bottom. (The front and back covers are printed on the same side of the sheet, likewise the inside front cover and inside back covers are printed on the same side.), 10. The cost of the centerfold (2 page) ad... this is described in printers jargon as the centerspread., 11. The periodicity (e.g. monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, etc.), 12. Total Net paid circulation (averaged over six months), 13. Rate card effective date.

Although rarely available, vintage comic book advertising rate cards are one the best source documents for comic data (especially circulation figures) and have become highly prized items among comic history researchers and collectors.

B-R-R-R-N-G
TH' DOORBELL'S RINGIN'
SEE WHO'S THERE, CR-MO
FAGAN, I WANT YOU T'MEET ONE OF THE GREATEST CONMEN IN THE COUNTRY.-HE'S GOINT' HELP US GET RID OF TH' PHONEY DOUGH.
UGH-AH, GLAD T'MEET YOU-KID-MURPH' HAS BEEN TELLING ME ABOUT YOU. GLAD T'MEETCHA
I CAN'T STAY LONG-THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS GOING ON DOWN TOWN.-THIS FIRE AN' THE CHIEF'S DAUGHTER IS RAISIN'A BIG RUMPUS.-GUESS IF YOU'RE SURE OF THIS FELLOW, MURPHY, GO AHEAD-
SURE?!-FAGAN, HE'S TH' REAL THING AN I KNOW IT,-DIDN'T I SEE HIS NAME IN TH' PAPER-DESCRIPT'N OF HIM AN' EVERYTH'N?
TH' CASE BOY, GUESS IT'S NOTHIN' MUCH AGAIN IT'S K ABOUT-I CAN GET A LITTLE SLEEP B- -BED IN A FEW
IF I WERE YOU, KID, I'D STAY RIGHT HERE FOR A WHILE. I'LL GO DOWN AN SEE WHAT'S GOING ON. MURPHY CAN PUT YOU UP IN A SAFE PLACE FOR THE NIGHT. I'LL CALL YOU MURPH AS SOON AS I GET THE
THAT MURPHY COPS THE CAKE!!!
DOPE!!
SEE THE NEXT ISSUE OF DETECTIVE DAN

about 7 1/2 inches by 10 inches. They made such a book, labeled it *Funnies on Parade*, and sold 10,000 to Proctor & Gamble for premium use.

This was the beginning of the "premium" period of the strips and M.C. Gaines, a smart salesman, arch exponent and actually the father of the magazine strip, took one look at *Funnies on Parade* and went out and peddled millions of 'em to various concerns which used then for premiums. They were books of from 32 to 96 pages and all were reprints of Sunday newspaper comics.

Went Fast

A year later, 1934, Gaines put out the first comic book printed in color – *Skippy* – for another manufacturer, who took 500,000 of them. Then Gaines pulled himself together. He'd been watching the concerns give away a million dollars worth of the stuff without realizing it could be sold.

Gaines made up a dummy book, called it *Famous Funnies*, took it around to the chain stores and said, "Look. The kids'll pay 10¢ apiece for 'em or you can have my right eye." They agreed, and Gaines booked his orders and called on Delacorte, who agreed to publish 35,000 copies.

They sold out in a week and 5,000 more were printed. But Delacorte was indifferent. His vice president and general manager, Mrs. Helen Meyers, was going to the hospital to have a baby, and Delacorte, who had a date in Europe, said the hell with it. So Gaines dropped *Famous Funnies* back in the lap of Eastern Color, which continued the publication. *Famous Funnies* was published in January 1934. It was the first monthly magazine of comic strips sold over the counter and it is still published.

The sensation prevails that it was a sensational success. This is not true. The loss on the first five issues was $4,152.60. But the sixth issue showed a profit of $1,976.37, and the seventh, $2,664.25. Thereafter it continued to gain.

Although Gaines is given the credit, if that is the word for fathering the idea of the comic strip magazine, his *Famous Funnies* was, however, a reprint job. The man who invented the magazine as it is today, that is original pictorial stories of terror, crime, fantasy and miracles, was Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson who, in the fall of 1934, published a 64-page, four color magazine called *New Fun*.

The size and style of *New Fun* (which Nicholson retitled *More Fun* after a dozen issues) has become the standard for the magazine comic industry today. *More Fun* is the oldest continuously published magazine of the "original" type. Nicholson followed it with *New Adventure Comics*.

For nearly two years these three magazines-*Famous Funnies*, *More Fun*, and *New Adventure Comics*-faced no competition other than their own. Then late in 1935 Delacorte decided to reenter the business with *Popular Comics*, which Gaines produced for him, and the frolic was on.

In 1936 United Features published *Tip Top Comics*, and the David McKay Co., an old established publishing house in Philadelphia, made a deal with Hearst to reprint King Features comics in a magazine called *King Comics*. (That's right-not Komics.) In these early days the reprint jobs were a goldmine to the publishers for the syndicate sold their stuff for about $5 a page. They soon fixed that. The reprint privilege for some syndicated comics now costs about $100 a page. The success of the magazines jacked up the price

Everybody got on the bandwagon. From the two magazine comics in 1934 the number had increased to 60 in 1939-40. In the next year they shot to the incredible number of 168. The explanation is interesting.

M.C. Gaines made up a dummy book, called it *Famous Funnies*, took it around to the chain stores and said, "Look. The kids'll pay 10¢ apiece for 'em or you can have my right eye."

It was partly due to the novelty of the strip presentation, which had a sinister effect on previously juvenile fiction. *St. Nicholas*, that fine old standby, was dead. *Youth's Companion* gave up, and the *American Boy* folded.

The picture type of presenting ideas to adults-*Life*, *Look*, etc., was a factor. Naturally the counterpart for children was the magazine strip. And it should be remembered that the comic strip was a depression baby; during the frightful period of economic decline the printing trades took a terrible beating.

When the success of the magazine strip seemed assured the printing trades gladly extended astonishing credit to men, in some instances with their only offices in their hats. Major Wheeler-Nicholson, according to Lloyd Jacquet, then editor of *More Fun* and *New Adventure*, began with a card table, a parlor chair and an old steel filing cabinet for office equipment.

But the paramount reason was the phenomenal success of a strip called Superman. For months in 1938, Jerry Siegel, who writes the continuity, and Joe Shuster, who draws him, tried vainly to peddle Superman to the syndicates and publishers, all of whom told them to scram. Finally they came to Gaines who recognized its novelty at once and immediately accepted it. It achieved its fabulous success in 1940-41, and everybody dug up a hero

"Dope! Danger! Death! Blood runs red behind the gilded fronts that hid the secret labyrinths of Wu Fang's diabolical Chinese torture chambers." So says the coming-next-issue ad in Detective Dan #1, on facing page. Page 16 from Detective Dan. Note that the Oriental villain is depicted with saliva-dripping fangs and the body of an octopus... whose tentacles ensnarl a reluctant (and naked) female. These "evil symbols" were typical of pulp magazines of the day.

PART II

YOUNGSTERS WANT BLOOD, THUNDER IN THEIR COMICS

FACING PAGE
"Teaser page" for the next issue of Detective Dan... an issue which was never published.

The reaction of a child of 10 or 12 (the average age of the comic strip magazine reader) is to violence. You may deplore it and even say no, but the denial won't stand against the figures. Strips featuring hero characters in pictorial tales of violent adventure (Superman, the Human Torch, the Batman, Captain Marvel, etc.) exceed all others in juvenile popularity,

Wonder Woman tangling with a tiger, (She Wins). Clockwise are Wonder Woman's brainstorm, Dr. William Moulton Marston, artist Harry G. Peter, Sheldon Mayer and M. C. Gaines

Looking back into comic book history!
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
Dr. William M. Marston, artist Harry G. Peter, Sheldon Mayer, and MC. Gaines discuss the original cover art for Sensation Comics. It was eventually published a year later as issue #17, May 1943.

and account for 75 percent of the total magazine strip circulation of 15,000,000 monthly.

The publishers are smartly aware of it, keep feeding death to the kids through villains now pictured as Nazis, Japs, and sundry enemies to society. Some of the more lurid touches are now banned. And all is cloaked by "editorial advisory boards" made up of well-known names in psychology and child science who front for the strip without having anything to do with it.

In a note to his writers and artists Sheldon Mayer, editor of All-American Comics, Inc., publishers of *Flash Comics*, *All-Star Comics*, *Sensation Comics*, etc., laid down these rules:

Never show a hypodermic needle. If it is necessary to drug a man do it by a ray or something equally fantastic. Never show a coffin, especially with a corpse in it. Never show an electric chair or a hanging. If you must, do it in silhouette or with lights dim. Never show anybody stabbed or shot. In a fencing scene you can show the action of the swords with a fencer being dropped.

Make killings in two panels. In one, the villain approaching with the weapon; in two, the villain leaving the body with the smoking gun. Never show the kill. No blood or bloody daggers, no skeletons or skulls. Don't roast anybody alive. Characters are not permitted to say, "What the h___." Call no one a "jerk."

Show no torture scenes; show no whippings. Little children must not be killed or die of sickness. On rare occasions their lives may be threatened. Don't chop the limbs off anybody; don't put anybody's eyes out.

Sometimes Evades

The substantial publishers have a similar editorial policy, and generally the rules are followed–in the letter Evasions through subterfuge and suggestion are easy. Sometimes they are actually violated.

In an issue of *Sensation Comics*, which features the strip Wonder Woman (one of Mayer's All-American group), a hypodermic needle is shown although it is eventually used harmlessly. The thrills to the kids is in the threat, which is more potent.

W onder Woman is a new strip, and it is being watched with interest by the industry whose axiom, based on bitter trial and error, has been that girl comic strip magazines are no good, will never succeed. There is a sound—and disturbing–reason for their belief. Girls of today have no childhood.

A girl at adolescence is a woman. Except in size, her clothes resemble the styles of her mother, with whom she sees the same movies, listens to the same radio programs, reads the same comic strips and same fan mags. Like Mrs Pasquale di Cicco, she is ready for her first night club at 14.

Her viewpoint is adult–pure poison to the comic strippers. She wants no fiddle-faddle about girls in strip, prefers heroes. The percentage of girls who read the hero strips is about 50.

But despite all this, Wonder Woman seems to have clicked. After the fifth issue, two months ago, M. C. Gaines, whose girl it is, polled his kid readers by coupon. Out of 640 replies in two days 512 of the children voted Wonder Woman the most interesting of the six featured characters in *Sensation Comics*.

Wonder Woman is the female Superman and her origin is as fantastic as her exploits. Like Superman, she is two characters – Diana Prince, a horn-rimmed bespectacled, rather unattractive nurse, and Wonder Woman, an Amazonian creature with sturdy flanks and gleaming face who can, and once did, tear a submarine apart with her hands.

HARDY'S POWERFUL FIST ROUNDS THE CORNER AND THREADS ITS WAY THE TWISTING, HARDY!
In the next issue ----
WU FANG KING OF THE DOPE SMUGGLERS
with diabolical fiendish cunning aided by a horde of depraved henchmen and an endless stream of money, unearthed from human blood, terrorism and despair, controlled but will spoil the intrigue, and indomitable courage of one man— DETECTIVE DAN.
single-handed, DETECTIVE DAN plunges into the seething sawdrost of hell spawned criminal intrigue, supernatural magic, bewildering torture and brings to the horrible end he deserves, WU FANG, the faceless, the most ruthless
DON'T MISS IT
MORE THRILLING THAN EVER
DETECTIVE DAN

Learned Creator

The strip was conceived and is written by Charles Moulton, a pseudonym for Dr. William Moulton Marston, A. B., LL.B., Ph.D. (al. Harvard), Phi Beta Kappa, professor and lecturer in psychology, author of many books and contributor to the Encyclopedia Britannica on psychology, discover of the systolic blood pressure deception test (the Lie Detector) and whose theory that women ultimately will rule the world he has supported with articles in sober tracts.

Dr. Marston's collaborator on the strip is M. C. Gaines and the author pseudonym derives from the middle name of each. When the professor brought in the strip Mr. Gaines, well aware of the apathy to girl comics, was going to throw it away. Later he decided to give it a whirl. If it goes, anything will.

Mr. Gaines, who is known as the father of the industry (*Famous Funnies*, first of the magazine strip publications, was his doing), surpassed himself last Easter with the publication of the first Biblical comic strip. Its first issue tells the story of Easter, and in the colorful proof the word Calvary is spelled Calvery, which distressed Mr. Gaines no end. He had submitted it to four clergymen, who passed the proof. It was an expensive correction.

> The strips are a natural, at least for children, because they fulfill fundamental desires. Children like color, they like violence, and they like heroes. Comic strip stories supply all three!

Almost at the time Mr. Gaines was issuing his Biblical strip, L. S. Gleason, president of Comic House, Inc., and a pioneer in the industry, competed with *Crime Does Not Pay Comics*. This, too, is an innovation.

Crime Does Not Pay features actual crimes retold pictorially, and it establishes another precedent with a cover that, for the first time for these magazines, is illustrated with photographs. The initial issue of *Crime Does Not Pay* relates the story of Lepke and Murder, Inc. The cover shows Lepke, the Panther Man of Hollywood, and Wild Bill Hickock.

Crime Does Not Pay is an excellent illustration of the new trend in comic strips, which is toward realism and accordingly slightly less juvenile in treatment. Although Superman still is the leading character in circulation, surveys indicate the Batman is gaining on him.

That is all right with Harry Donnenfeld. He publishes both. But it gives pause to rival publishers and some are beginning to tone down the incredible exploits and adventures of their heroes.

The Reason

It should give pause, too, to the child psychologists, for back of the situation, behind this apparent preference for the more realistic, more plausible Batman, is a condition of extraordinary interest.

The type of comic strip published today, "original" stories of fantastic and violent adventure, began in 1934. The average age being ten to twelve those early readers are now eighteen and twenty. Successive classes of graduate comic strip magazine readers now are sixteen and eighteen.

The publishers must hold that reader, and seemingly he is willing to be held. So they have made their art jobs more workmanlike and have introduced plausibility and realism. The trend is faint, but it is becoming more pronounced.

The hope is that ultimately the field will be widened to include the adult reader. It should be borne in mind that this refers strictly to the magazine strip. Many adults read the strips in the daily newspapers. The distinction was explained in yesterday's article (Part I). The publishers actually feel that their success is assured. For this is an acute age. People want to know what and right away. Pictures, symbols tell them. It takes time to read, and some intelligence.

It is hard to see how the publishers can lose, for the strips are a natural, at least for children, because they fulfill fundamental desires. Children like color, they like violence and they like heroes. Comic strip stories supply all three.

But there is a limit. Of the 900-odd characters featured in the present magazine some 400 are heroes, and the kids just cannot worship that many heroes, with profit to the publishers.

That is the real reason for the decline in the number of titles. It should be remembered that in the last few years the annual circulation has not lessened. It is steadily from 12,000,000 to 15,000,000 monthly, or about 150,000,000 a year.

This is virtually a constant market, and it offers a bedevilling problem for the advertiser. It horrifies the agencies to have to miss such an enormous medium, but thus far most of them have shied from the field.

The magazines get some advertising, but it is mostly "send no money" and mail order stuff. *The Saturday Evening Post*, in a band ad, once tried the comic strip magazine field seeking juvenile sales to boys and girls. With what success is not known.

Field Is Limited

Of course, the strip field is quite limited. Cigarettes, cosmetics, and other commodities suitable only for adults have no place in juvenile magazines. Another reason the publishers are trying earnestly to win adult readers - a tough job, since they cannot risk losing the kids.

But to get into the top money by exploiting their tremendous circulation as an advertising medium they will have to stabilize their industry. At present no code binds them. Publishers complain that there are some who will sell their back page for $100 after issuing rate cards at

a much higher price.

The field is open to the shoe-string operator, the fly-by-

and that stay young.

The Comic Magazines:

This field is now so crowded that it would be suicide to enter it unless it was with some idea strong enough to sweep away the competition.

How to make a Comic magazine pay for itself:

If ~~you~~ we followed the plan outlined here of grabbing all rights to the characters in the magazine, thus depriving the author of other profits, we would either have to pay him enough to compensate for this loss or get material so inferior that it wouldn't sell beyond the first issue. This is again limiting the magazine to amateurs.

Summary:

There is nothing in this prospectus of any value that has not already been considered by the editorial department. There are a great many ways of saving money, and it is advisable to do so wherever possible, but the means suggested in this prospectus will be revealed as false economies when studied. Paying a flat rate of ½¢ per word, or less, for editorial contents only serves to produce a shoddy product which the public will refuse to buy. It is possible to economize without doing this and without offending the public with complete trash. The same thing applies to the suggestions concerning the editorial staff.

Memo to: Mr. Gibney

Re: Prospectus of new magazines

Formation of New Company:

To begin with, the formation of any new company would be entirely uncalled for and an additional expense in the way of overhead other than editorial. Furthermore, this prospectus is wrong in estimating the editorial overhead. It would be impossible to put out such a number of magazines with only two editors and a stenographer. It would mean that each man would have to edit two magazines a week. To do a competent job of editing - and the poorer word rate paid, the more editing required - one man cannot ~~xxxxx~~ average more than 35,000 words a day. To handle two magazines a week, each man would have to devote a minimum of three days each week to that job. Two more days would be required for proof-reading, estimating the best average at 50,000 words a day. This makes a total of five days a week and doesn't take into consideration reading, which should take two days, or any of the numerous other jobs in the editor's "must" list. The least number of men it would take to handle eight magazines a month, and do a competent job, would be five or six.

Books to be published:

Group B -- There is nothing in this group that we are not doing - or intend doing. The estimated word rate here, however is a little low. A certain portion of the book can be bought for ½¢ a word, but the featured story will have to cost more, unless we are interested only in putting out a one-shot. You cannot, as he suggests for the 15¢ Western, buy a 40,000 word novel for $150 and expect to get anything which will cause a reader to buy a second copy.

Prize Group:

An impractical idea, to put it in the mildest form. The only writers you could get to work for such a magazine would be the rankest amateurs. No professional would work for such an arrangement. Pulp readers may sometimes be adolescent in their tastes, but they're not quite moronic; even they can spot a ham when they see one. So, this too classes as a one-shot idea. As for the reader half of this idea - i.e. the reader having a hand in the editorial pie - we are already carrying that out in LBFW.

Group C.:

Nothing here that we aren't doing - or intend doing.

This rare 1942 memo from the files of Popular Publications Inc. (author unknown) discusses the formation of a new comic book company, development of new comic book titles, the issue of author rights to comic characters, and the suggestion that "this field [comic magazines] is now so crowded that it would be suicide to enter it unless it was with some idea strong enough to sweep away the competition."

PART III

THE COMICS, ESCAPE STUFF FOR 10 TO 12

When the comic magazine publishers proudly state (and they often do) that they keep their strips clean for the kiddies they are stealing a bow. Sex doesn't make sense for kids and a publisher would be a sucker to introduce it. Most of the publishers know this.

The average age of the comic strip reader, or looker, is ten to twelve. Children of those ages have no more use for sex than they have for Bach's 48 preludes for the well tempered clavichord. Now and then a girl character is shown partially disrobed, but it is usually to engage in a stunt or a fight and she is about as passion-inspiring as a Russian winter. It is unfair to indict the strips on a sex charge.

Only a few do. Only a few, in fact (of the intellectuals that is), pay any attention to them at all. It is surprising they have aroused so little public study. American children spend $15,000,000 a year for these pictorial dime novels of murder, mayhem, and preposterous adventure, unlabeled comic strips. It is a state of things, but there is small... other about it.

Superman Book Column

Indeed, a number of psychologists, educators, and librarians endorse the strips. Josette Frank, consultant on children's books for the Child Study Assn. of America and the author of *What Books for Children*, approves many of the comic strip magazines published today.

For the Superman publications she has a department in which she reviews and recommends certain "exciting and interesting" live books. It was a smart move of the publisher to hire her. And it is all right with Miss Frank, too, for she could obtain no greater medium for her message, which is, of course, to fan the dying spark of interest in the "live" or reading book. The principal objection to the comic strip magazines is that they not only wean children away from real books—they do it with an inferior product.

The most fanatical interest of children in the comic strip magazines is of considerable social and cultural importance. And it is an extremely confusing problem.

Fantasy Plus Realism

It is impossible to tell a child not to do something that he does naturally-and have him obey. A child reacts to fantasy and violence and his humor is largely sadistic.

To see a man slip on a banana peel is [illegible] to a

child, even if the unfortunate slipper fractures his spine.

The comic strip magazine answer these natural juvenile instincts. "They serve a real purpose in meeting a child's desire for fantasy," says Miss Frank. "You have to give a child fantasy as well as realism. Especially it is necessary today when reality is pretty hard to take. Moreover, some of the strips have real entertainment value."

Gweneira Williams and Jane Wilson go further than Miss Frank, going all-out in their defense of the strips. Miss Williams is the children's librarian in the Schenectady Public Library and Miss Wilson is the librarian of the Scotia (N.Y.) Public Library.

Why They Like 'Em

Together they wrote "They Like It Rough", an article in a recent issue of the dignified *Library Journal* that set librarians a-twitter all over the country. Not only did the ladies defend the strips, they characterized the children's interest in them as "reassuring."

For the meat of their piece they questioned about 120 pupils, a cross section from the lower grades to students in the Scotia Junior High School. "Why do you like the comics?" the children were asked, and here are some of the answers. "They express thought in modern life." "I like the tough talk." "After reading them I will know what to do if I am ever a prisoner when we play G-men."

The Misses Williams and Wilson ask, "Just what is dreadful or startling in answers like these?"

Well, some reasonably intelligent people would scarcely call them "reassuring." But the ladies insist that those who denounce the comic strips are Victorian.

"It is time to cease being Victorian about the comic strips," they argue. "This is scarcely a Victorian Age, and childhood, in its eminently sane and matter-of-fact way, has reacted to these years of terror and international blackguardism with characteristic common sense. Youngsters want to read about the rumbling realities that are threatening our world; they take part in these realities by proxy with Superman and Captain America."

The Puritan "Terrors"

Consider that Lepke, the Esposito brothers, Dillinger, and Baby Face Nelson and other characters were introduced in the *Crime Does Not Pay* comics! This strip was recently issued by L. S. Gleason, a pioneer stripper (now in the U. S. Army) and his office says that its sales are increasing to a point likely to make it their best seller.

From the Victorian angle the Misses Williams and Wilson take up one of the graver charges against the strips: the terror and violence of their crude and plotless stories.

"Puritan children were brought up on sadistic horror of Fox's Martyrs, and the gloomy terrors of the Old Testament," they wrote. "Victorian children were fed on Dore's vivid picturizations of hell, and the scalp-raising adventures of Jesse James and the various ruthless Indian exterminators. Did these children show any appreciable signs of moral degeneration?"

"Pictorial Distortion"

It's a begging question. These ladies of the library have written a devilishly clever and scholarly defense of the comics, but its argument is defeatist throughout with a pronounced suggestion in its approach to the comics that "if you can't lick 'em, join 'em." And Dore's picturizations of hell are hardly comparable to some of the current atrocities in the four-colored comic prints, an altogether different kind of hellish terror.

Phyllis Fenner, librarian of the Manhasset, L. I. Day School and a nationally known children's librarian through her admirable book, *Our Library: The Story Of A School Library That Works*, is definitely opposed to the comic strips because, she insists, they DO stifle the children's reading habit and in the worst possible manner-pictorial distortion.

...picturizations of hell are hardly comparable to some of the current atrocities in the four-colored comic prints, an altogether different kind of hellish terror.

Miss Fenner is well aware, and so are many of her colleagues, that more and more older boy and girl borrowers ask for a "thin" book. And against the annual $15,000,000 take of the comic magazine publishers, Miss Fenner puts the pitiful estimated annual gross business for children's books: $2,000,000.

It is mainly the form of presentation in the comic strip to which she objects. She sees a vast difference between the classic tales and characterizations that are our English literary heritage and the tawdry superficialities and violence of the strips. They are, she believes a sad method of inculcating taste and discrimination, making for laziness and fevering the mind.

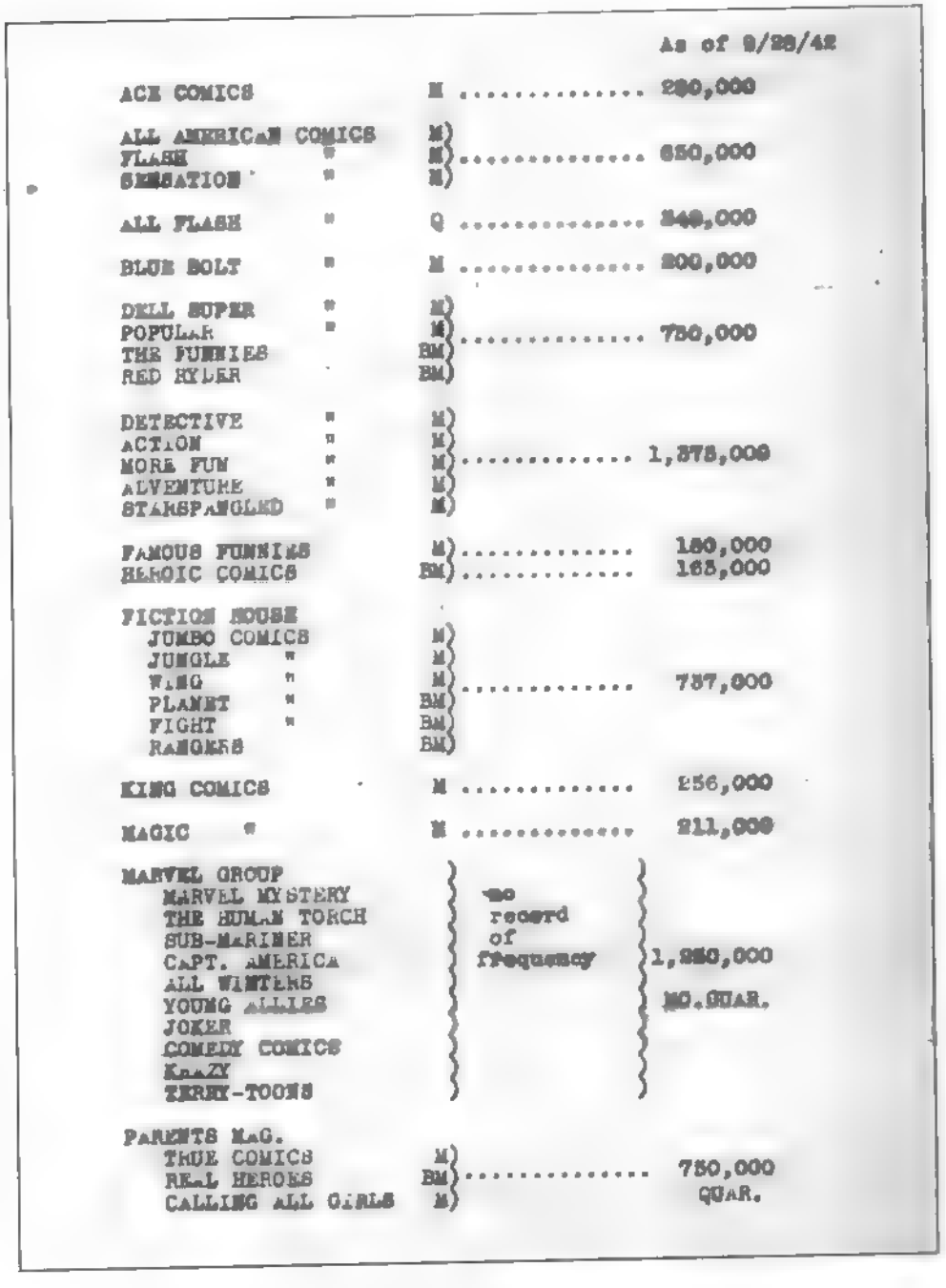
The Bookless Homes

And there is another factor of deep significance and complication. There are in America more than 500,000 children of the age of 12 working at full or part time jobs. The majority of these are readerless. How many more live in bookless homes is not known, but their number must be sizable.

Now it is precisely this group that Miss Fenner and her colleagues desire most to reach. And they are invariably stymied by the comic magazine, the main mental stimulant for this unfortunate class.

Very well, then, say the comic strip publishers (and a number of sociologists support their view), at least the chil

An extremely rare photograph of artist Charles Biro (left) and publisher Lev S. Gleason (right). The two are conferring on the latest issue of *Boy Comics* as Biro's pet "Squeeks the monk" lends his editorial advise. Gleason is holding his newest comic book publication, *Boy Comics* #4 (Apr 1942)



		As of 9/28/42
ACE COMICS	M	280,000
ALL AMERICAN COMICS FLASH " SENSATION "	M M M	650,000
ALL FLASH "	Q	340,000
BLUE BOLT "	M	800,000
DELL SUPER " POPULAR " THE FUNNIES RED RYDER	M M BM BM	750,000
DETECTIVE " ACTION " MORE FUN " ADVENTURE " STARSPANGLED "	M M M M M	1,375,000
FAMOUS FUNNIES HEROIC COMICS	M BM	180,000 165,000
FICTION HOUSE JUMBO COMICS JUNGLE " WING " PLANET " FIGHT " RANGERS	M M M BM BM BM	737,000
KING COMICS	M	256,000
MAGIC "	M	211,000
MARVEL GROUP MARVEL MYSTERY THE HUMAN TORCH SUB-MARINER CAPT. AMERICA ALL WINNERS YOUNG ALLIES JOKER COMEDY COMICS KRAZY TERRY-TOONS	no record of frequency	1,280,000 NO.QUAR.
PARENTS MAG. TRUE COMICS REAL HEROES CALLING ALL GIRLS	M BM M	750,000 QUAR.

This astonishingly well preserved and hand-typed two-page memo dated 9/28/42 provides circulation data for individual comic titles and comic title groups. Note the periodicity after each title (M - monthly, BM - bi-monthly, Q - quarterly). This circulation data clearly shows that *Superman*, with a bi-monthly circulation of 1,100,000 far surpassed any other title on the list. For years, collectors and researchers have speculated on the print-run and circulation figures for Golden Age comic book titles in an attempt to develop theories about the specific rarity of issues and the general rarity of titles and companies. This amazing window into Golden Age history is one of the few surviving pieces of documentation that provide this information

...ren's addiction to the strips affords them some reading material. And perhaps it is the librarians who are lax in only deploring the strips rather than doubling their efforts to develop the child beyond his comic strip start.

To be fair, one must admit that the heroes of the better strips use acceptable English. Indeed, the dialogue is often free from slang idiom. According to the Misses Williams and Wilson, Dr. Ernest Thorndike, after an examination of some of these better strips, found the vocabulary range wide and rather well done.

Two Childhood Needs

Another children's book authority, Louise Seaman Bechtel in a sound analysis wrote for the *Horn Book* (July-August 1941), a magazine devoted to child literature of which she is an associate editor. She rationally observes that the comic strips fulfills two normal childhood needs. "One savage, to battle out its aggressions, the other civilized, to share in the doings of a party hidden adult world."

Miss Bechtel argues it is absurd to stress that the comics are injurious to every child who reads them. She says that many bright children in good homes, who read good books and share intelligent and artistic family discussions, at the same time devour comics.

They are a force now recognized by the United States Government. At the request of the Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, the publishers in all their issues currently make a direct appeal to children, and through them to their

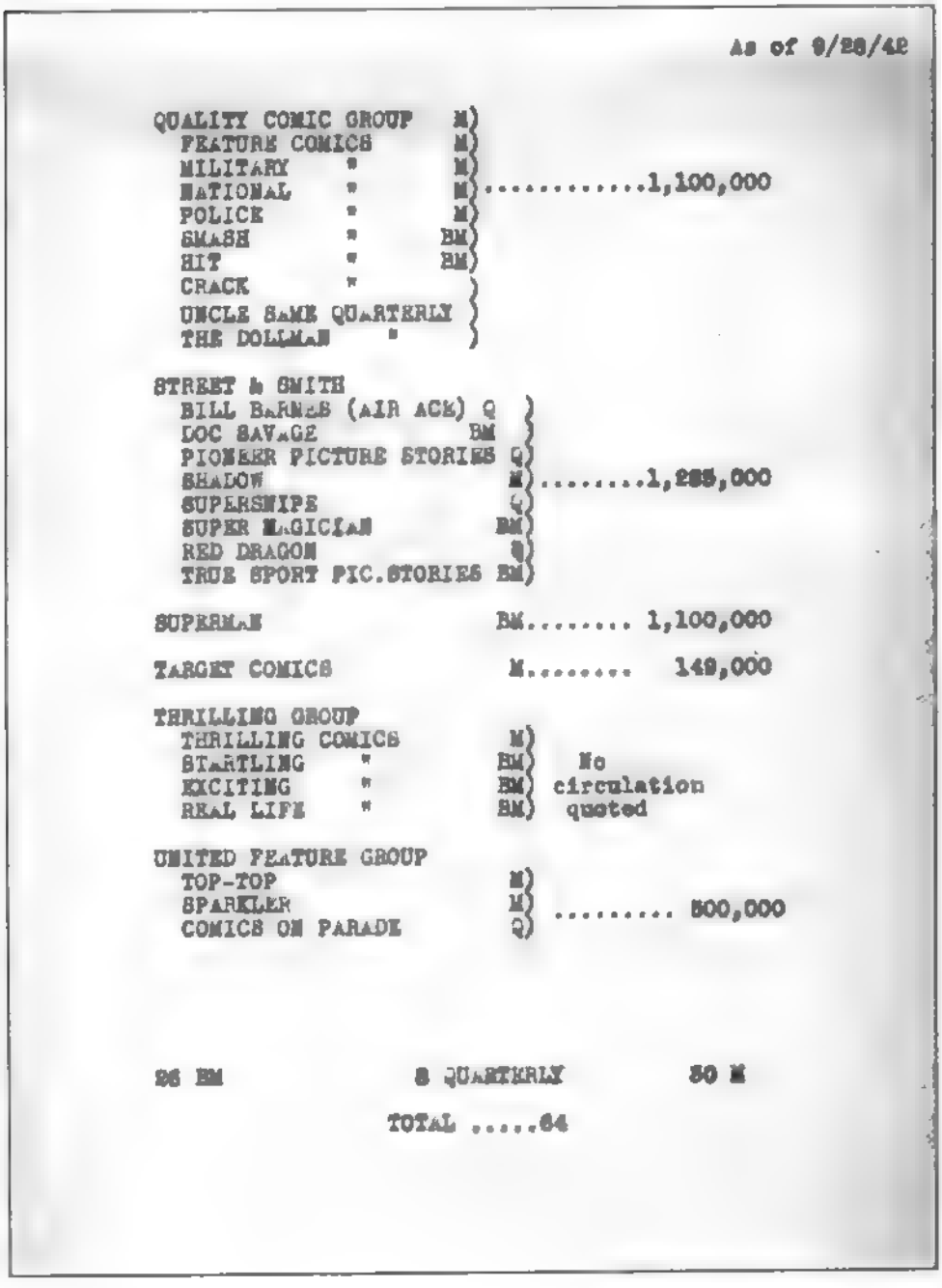
parents, for the purchase of War Bonds and Stamps. The campaign is under the direction of M. C. Gaines, president of All American Comics, Inc., who is chairman of the publishers' committee.

Headache For Editors

It is impossible to neglect their influence in any field relating to children, and conservative editors of children's books and 'reading' magazines (the few that are left) are slowly going nuts over what to do. The dignified and tastefully presented *Child Life*, in its March issue, found it convenient to serialize Mark Twain's "Prince and the Pauper" in strip form.

It is also, in candor, quite easy to overemphasize the importance of the strips' influence. Many of us who grew up on the dime novel have managed a fairly organized, non criminal adult life. But even that is a weak response to the complicated social and cultural problem the strips provoke. At least the dime novel was READING matter.

The matter of discussion continues. But the only fact that has emerged thus far is that 'Alice in Wonderland' is the best children's book ever written for adults. ■



As of 9/28/42

QUALITY COMIC GROUP M)
FEATURE COMICS M)
MILITARY " M)
NATIONAL " M).....1,100,000
POLICE " M)
SMASH " BM)
HIT " BM)
CRACK ")
UNCLE SAM QUARTERLY)
THE DOLLMAN ")

STREET & SMITH
BILL BARNES (AIR ACE) Q)
DOC SAVAGE BM)
PIONEER PICTURE STORIES Q)
SHADOW M).....1,285,000
SUPERSNIPE Q)
SUPER MAGICIAN BM)
RED DRAGON Q)
TRUE SPORT PIC.STORIES BM)

SUPERMAN BM..... 1,100,000

TARGET COMICS M..... 149,000

THRILLING GROUP
THRILLING COMICS M)
STARTLING " BM) No
EXCITING " BM) circulation
REAL LIFE " BM) quoted

UNITED FEATURE GROUP
TOP-TOP M)
SPARKLER M) 800,000
COMICS ON PARADE Q)

26 BM 8 QUARTERLY 50 M

TOTAL 64

The publisher and editor of Comic Book Marketplace would like to extend a special thanks to Joel Frieman of Argosy Communications, Inc for discovering and sharing the original 1942 file from Popular Publications, Inc.. The discovery is considered by many to be among the most significant in recent times. Not only did the file provide this original article on the history of comics from 1942, it also established Detective Dan and Ace King as important developments in the comic book timeline... provided actual Golden Age circulation data... as well as rare photographs of comic book pioneers. All comic book collectors and historians owe Mr. Frieman a genuine debt of gratitude.

GALLERY OF GREATS

By Stephen H. Gentner

RULAH, JUNGLE GODDESS!

Buxom, splayed, knife-wielding babes... massacred crooks, natives, & wild beasts... wanton & senseless violence & mayhem at the turn of every page! Yep... Fox comics really had it all!

Buxom, splayed, knife-wielding babes cutting up crooks and wild beasts! Wanton, senseless violence and mayhem at the turn of a page! You have to admit—Fox comics had it all from 1947-50! It wasn't so much that these books were cheaply produced, they obviously were. The remaindered colored paper for the interiors and the non-gloss covers with chunks of wood floating in them proves that. No, the sizzle on the steak with Fox titles was the "base" nature of their content... as well as their construction.

The "Queen" of the bosomy bevy at Fox in 1947 was Rulah, Jungle Goddess! I'll admit, Phantom Lady is, today, probably "hotter" in the minds of some collectors... but Rulah commanded the covers of 35 plus issues for Fox as opposed to Phantom Lady's mere 13 or so. Fox hooked it's brassiere and fortune on the hot, steamy jungle where the action was - and Rulah was the Fox star at center stage!

A society adventuress bored with her mundane existence, Jane Dodge took an airplane up for a joy-ride into darkest Africa. The craft developed engine trouble, and Jane was forced to hit the silk.

Exiting the aircraft, her jumpsuit is reduced to strategically placed tatters. As Jane put it, "Tsk, Tsk! I'm like Eve in the garden!" She replaces the torn garment with a string-tied bikini made from the skin of a giraffe which was conveniently killed in the plane crash.

Then, an evil gal named Nurla discovers the plane wreck after Jane leaves the scene. Concocting a tale that she is a moon goddess, bad-girl Nurla bamboozles the natives of Towla village into desecrating a neighboring villages' tomb for pearls. Giant cobras guard the site, and the scene is set for mayhem.

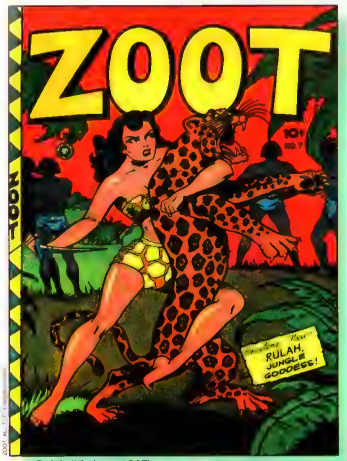
Meanwhile, Jane proves the plane is hers by matching her name on the plane with a bracelet that she wears. Back at the tomb, the cobras do their duty, but Nurla gains the pearls "made of moonbeams for the moon-goddess". Jane confronts Nurla, and breaks up the plot.

Jane's wisdom and truthfulness earn her the admiration of the chief. He calls her a goddess, and then to show his appreciation, sics a leopard on her to prove her strength! Jane lacerates the leopard, and is named "Rulah". (It sure is a good thing that the chief liked Rulah. Think what he would have done if he had hated her!)

"We will serve you forever!", exclaims the chief. Being the opportunist she was, Rulah lets the natives believe what they will. "But I hadn't planned on being here forever... ", she utters—and then in a thought balloon she reverts to type, "Still I guess a gal can change her mind...a goddess, eh?...I'm sure they don't really mean that... but, confidentially, shame on me, I like it!"

Bowing and scraping to her, the natives chant the name "Rulah, Rulah!" Enjoying her new found power, Rulah (armed only with a dagger and a dynamite bod) swings through the trees and becomes the protector of the natives who have embraced her!

How the readers perceived Rulah's domination of these jungle men (and women) bears some thought. Her cool and off-hand subjugation of men plays into some psychiatric beliefs of latent lesbianism (as described in some of the prominent anti comic book articles of the day). To view Rulah's mercenary actions another way, one could charge men copping cheap thrills by



Rulah #7 (June 1947)

All Top #12 (July 1948)

Rulah #18 (September 1948)

being manipulated by a Jungle dominatrix! As in some kinky comic sexual fantasy, "Hurt me Rulah - WOW!"

Old Doc Wertham found plenty of this stuff to grind his ax with in Rulah stories, whether the "kink" was woman "hate" men... or woman "thrill" men, who can say? The writer's conscious or unconscious pandering to these tastes amid all the other violence and sex meant only one thing to Fox publishing—SALES!

Rulah's blazing star was actually short lived, however. Even though she debuted in *Zoot* #7 (June 1947) she then took over the title with issue #17. Rulah ran under her own "brand" until issue #27 (June 1949). Ultimately, the title slipped into obscurity as a romance title (yech)!

Just Crime In The Jungle!

If you want a good knifing, pick-up a Fox comic! I mean really... the number of impalings and stabbings in Rulah lends new meaning to the term "overkill." The types of violence so graphically rendered each month were played to the lowest common denominator:

Base... ugly... wanton...

These were the elements that busty

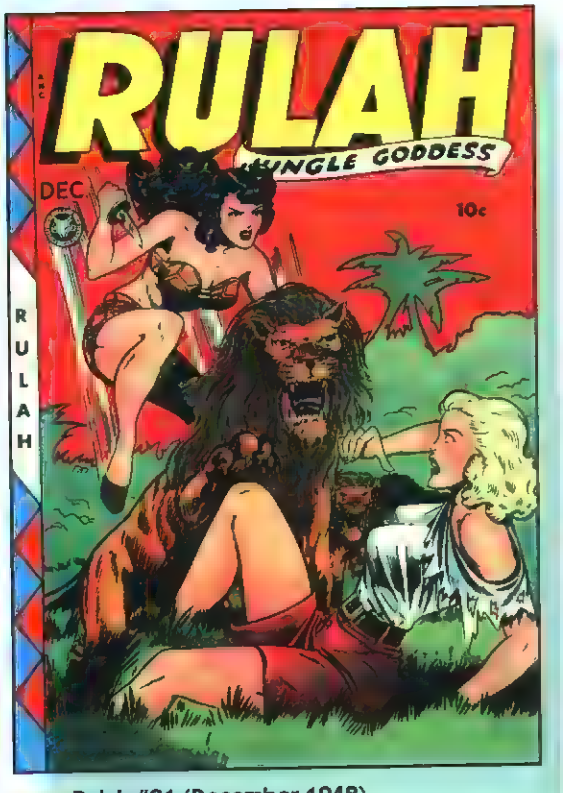
(*Continued on page 45*

Rulah #22 (January 1949)

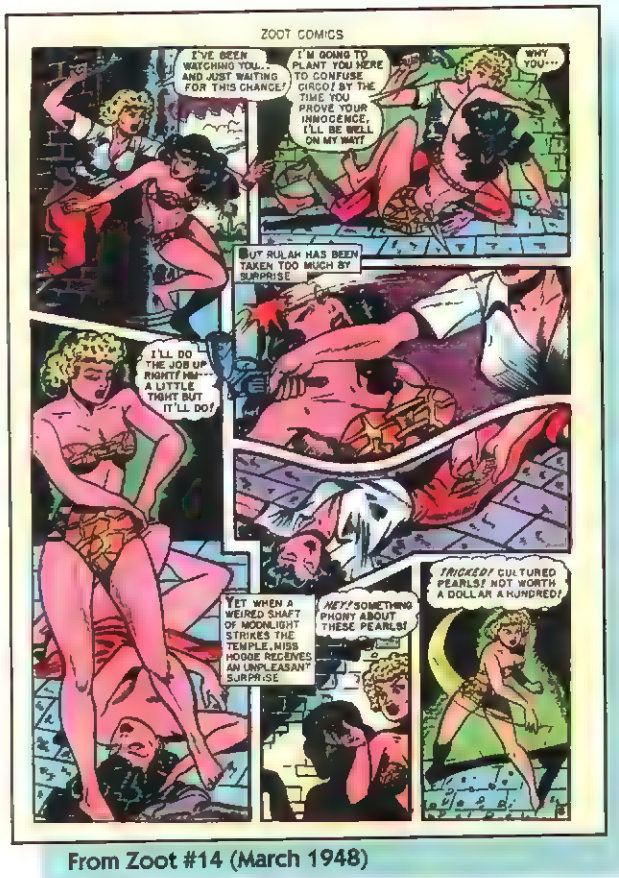
Zoot #9 (October 1947)

BLOOD IS DRAWN, AND DEATH MUST STRIKE ..
BUT TO WHOM?
I DID IT! I KILLED HIM!
AIEE! YOU ARE A GODDESS! YOU HAVE PROVED YOUR WISDOM AND YOUR STRENGTH!
WE NAME YOU RULAH!
RULAH, ..A JUNGLE GODDESS!
WE WILL SERVE YOU FOREVER!
BUT I HADN'T PLANNED ON BEING HERE FOREVER
STILL I GUESS A GAL CAN CHANGE HER MIND A GODDESS, EH?.. I'M SURE THEY DON'T REALLY MEAN THAT. BUT, CONFIDENTIALLY 'SHAME ON ME, I LIKE IT!

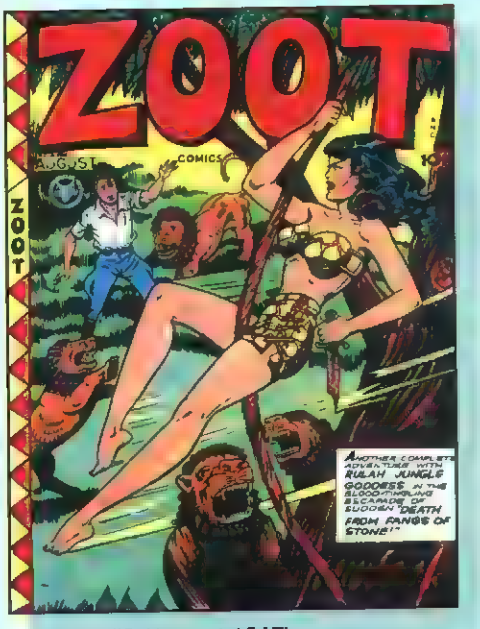
Last page of origin story from Zoot #7 (June 1947)



Rulah #21 (December 1948)


ZOOT COMICS
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU... AND JUST WAITING FOR THIS CHANCE!
I'M GOING TO PLANT YOU HERE TO CONFUSE GIRGO! BY THE TIME YOU PROVE YOUR INNOCENCE, I'LL BE WELL ON MY WAY!
WHY YOU...
BUT RULAH HAS BEEN TAKEN TOO MUCH BY SURPRISE
I'LL DO THE JOB UP RIGHT! HM! A LITTLE TIGHT BUT IT'LL DO!
YET WHEN A WEIRED SHAFT OF MOONLIGHT STRIKES THE TEMPLE, MISS HODGE RECEIVES AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE
HEY! SOMETHING PHONY ABOUT THESE PEARLS!
TRICKED! CULTURED PEARLS! NOT WORTH A DOLLAR A HUNDRED!

From Zoot #14 (March 1948)



Zoot #8 (August 1947)

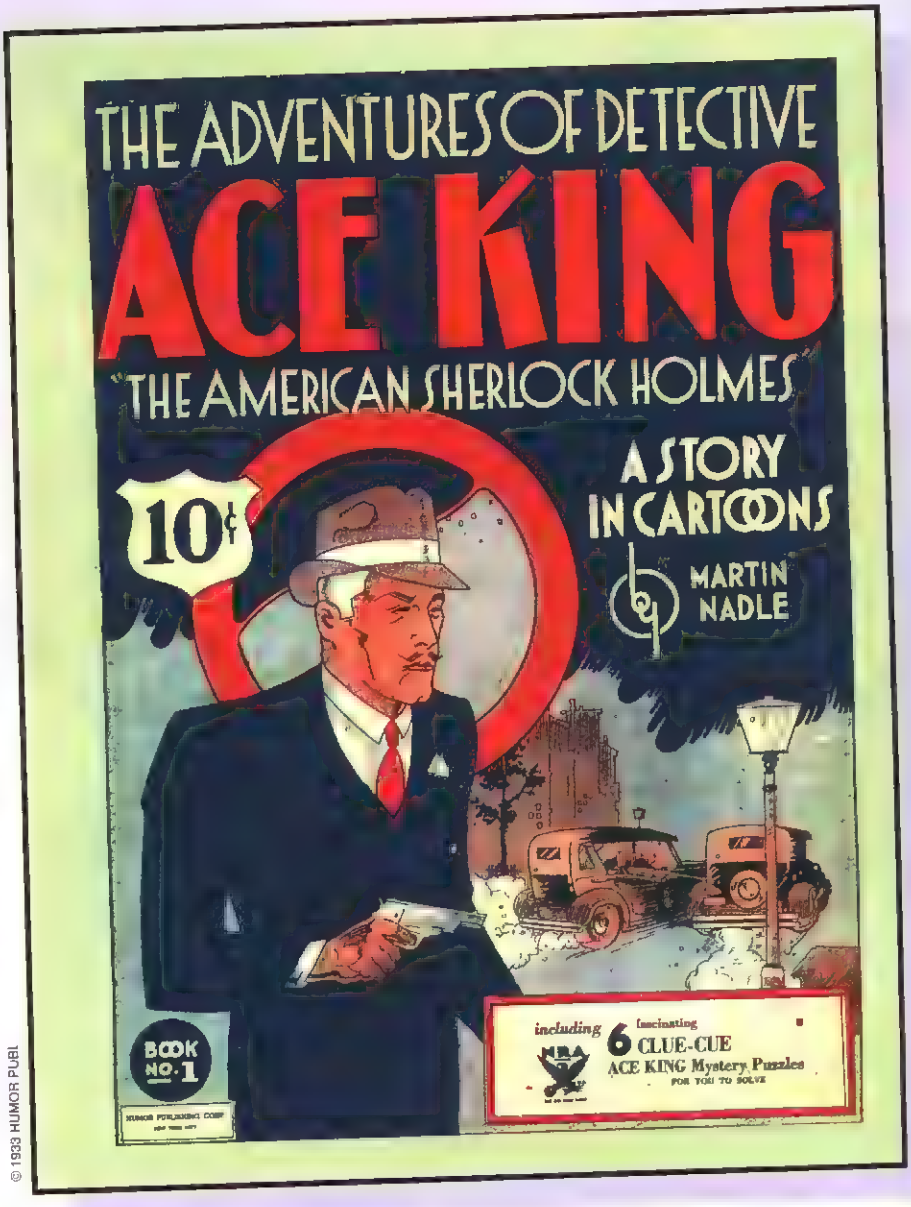
Zoot #13 (April 1948)

Rulah #19 (October 1948)

THE "MISSING LINK" IN COMIC BOOK HISTORY? Pictured on facing page is the only known copy of *Detective Dan Secret Operative No. 48.* The extremely rare book, which hit the stands in 1933, may be the inspiration for, and the "prototype" of *Detective Comics. Detective Dan* is a comic panel book featuring a serious character in original stories of a single theme, and was apparently influential in the development of Siegel and Shuster's earliest work.

THE AMERICAN SHERLOCK HOLMES was the nickname for Detective Ace King. When originally discovered, both *The Adventures Of Detective Ace King* (1933) and *Detective Dan Secret Operative No. 48* were thought to be Dick Tracy "knock-offs"... however later research revealed that the two rare issues were distinctly different. While Dick Tracy retains his title as the worlds most famous cartoon detective, his stories are laced with humor and satire. This is not the case with Ace King and Detective Dan... both characters are set in action/crime stories told in a totally serious style.

COURTESY THE GEORGE HAGENAUER COLLECTION


THE ADVENTURES OF DETECTIVE
ACE KING
"THE AMERICAN SHERLOCK HOLMES"
A STORY IN CARTOONS
10¢
MARTIN NADLE
BOOK NO. 1
including 6 fascinating CLUE-CUE ACE KING Mystery Puzzles FOR YOU TO SOLVE

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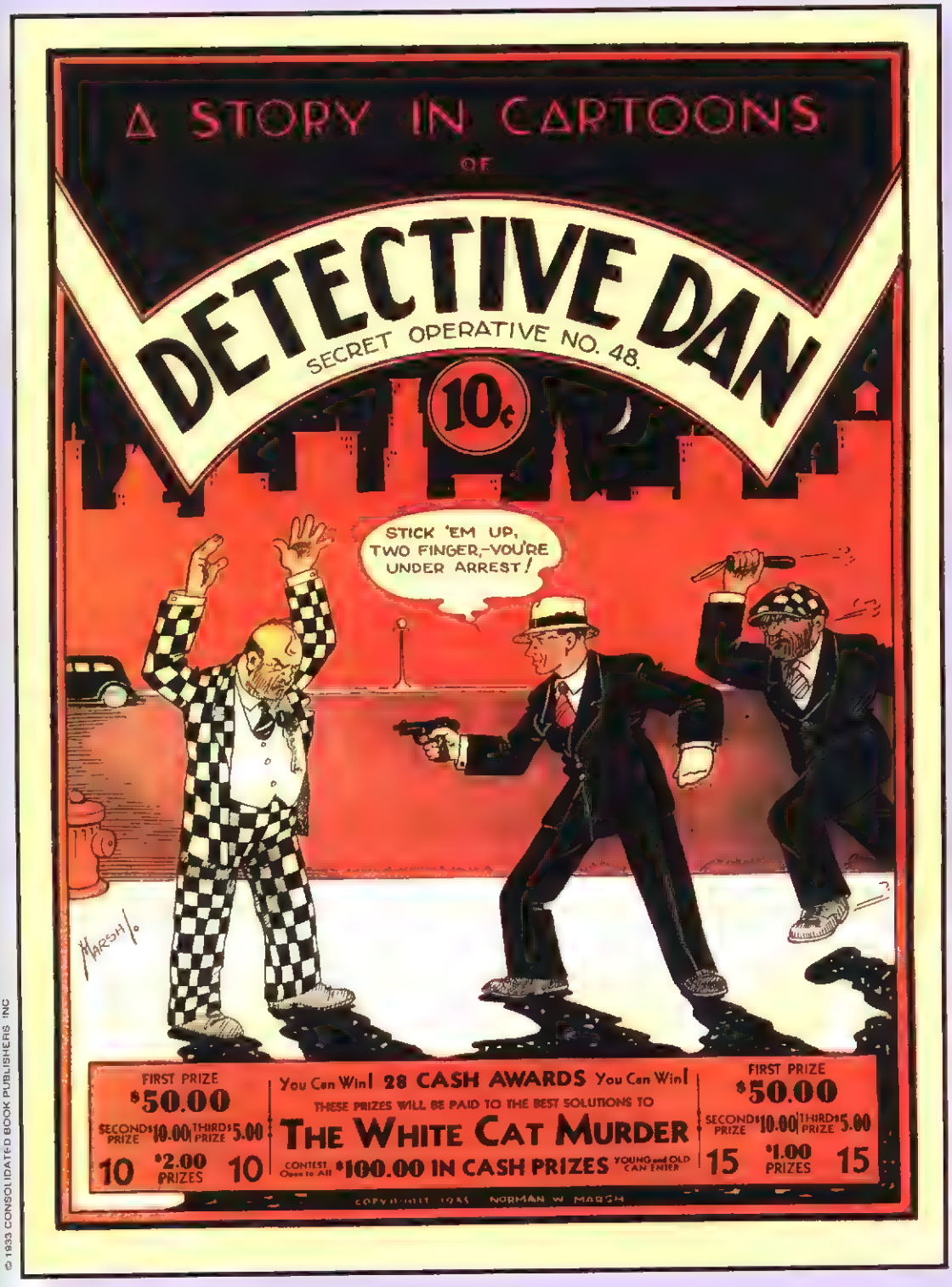
A STORY IN CARTOONS
OF
DETECTIVE DAN
SECRET OPERATIVE NO. 48.
10¢
STICK 'EM UP, TWO FINGER,-YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
MARSH
FIRST PRIZE $50.00
SECOND PRIZE $10.00 THIRD PRIZE $5.00
10 $2.00 PRIZES 10
You Can Win! 28 CASH AWARDS You Can Win!
THESE PRIZES WILL BE PAID TO THE BEST SOLUTIONS TO
THE WHITE CAT MURDER
CONTEST Open to All $100.00 IN CASH PRIZES YOUNG and OLD CAN ENTER
FIRST PRIZE $50.00
SECOND PRIZE $10.00 THIRD PRIZE $5.00
15 $1.00 PRIZES 15
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Comic Book MARKETPLACE

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heroines like Rulah provided... and these were the same thrills and graphic physical harm found in any of the infamous crime book set in the "big city". All Fox did was to change the venue and voilá... city crime and corruption became Jungle crime and corruption. City crime bosses with murderous thugs for henchmen were replaced with Voo-doo chiefs with murderous animals as hench mensch. Gaudy, vacuous violence for violence's sake, crammed full of naughty poses and lots of flesh to tamp it all down!

Each issue was drawn beautifully by Jack Kamen and Matt Baker, then printed on the cheesiest paper that would hold ink!. Sex with brutality, sex with violence, sex with bondage, and sex with vivid spear and knife penetrations... and did I say sex? Even the creatures that threaten Rulah on all those amazing covers knew exactly where to "strategically" position their claws and tentacles for maximum suggestiveness!

The plots revolved around Rulah's honesty and integrity in juxtaposition to the ferocious creatures, evil natives, greedy white hunters, and power-mad despots she faced. Castles, caves, and caravans pulled Rulah into amazing predicaments with story titles like: "Death from Fangs of Stone," "Slave Girls of the Monstrous Bwana Terra," Satan's Satyrs," "Harem of Horror," and "Vampire Garden"! Rulah's "honesty and integrity" sort of gets muddled a little in these stories, especially considering her status as Jungle Goddess - but I guess I shouldn't be so fussy.

The villains died very often by means of their own fanaticism i.e.. the Lion Master gets eaten by lions, the Gator Guy gets gutted by a gator, etc. A much overused expression comes to mind at the end of lots of these tomes — "How ironic, killed by his own evil". Irony aside, these dramas smell a lot like the tried and true plot cliché "hoisted on his own petard"!

Also notable is *Zoot* #15, which contains the first appearance of her trusty black panther, "Sabre" in the title. With death everywhere, Sabre watched Rulah's back... and on many occasions saved her from man and beast alike.

Oh So Onerous Stereotypes

The manner is which Afro-Americans were portrayed was particularly onerous. Our sensibilities today cringe uncomfortably at how much license was taken. It is made all the more odd, in that these politically incorrect stereotypes were often visited on these natives by a gifted Afro-American artist named Matt Baker! Baker did nothing to remove or soft-peddle the "ooga-booga" native stigma. Rulah stories were full of craven, cowardly, bone-through-the-nose natives. They usually ran for cover or quivered in caves before being eviscerated by beak, claw, or Rulah herself!

All-Top All Stars

Besides *Zoot* and later *Rulah*, Fox also produced an *All-Star* type comic... *All-Top*. As promised in the title, it had stories from their "top" titles which included one Rulah story, one Phantom Lady story, a Blue Beetle epic, and a Jo Jo, Jungle King story. The "Fox Formula" common to all these titles and stories were violence, cheesecake, brutality, bondage, blood, bosoms... and more bosoms! But of all the characters they had to choose from, the covers to ALL of the *All-Tops* were graced with Rulah, Jungle Goddess! She was their number one! *All-Top* ran with Rulah, et al, from issue #8, (November 1947) until issue #18 (March 1949). It was a testimony to the drawing power of Rulah's character - (or the fact that she showed a lot of skin)...that she had this honor.

A Detriment To Youth

As the calendar turned to 1949, public and professional outcry began to dog the trail of these titles. The forces which believed these types of stories and stereotypes were detrimental to the youth of America gained strength and momentum. Eventually, the climate became untenable for Fox and he pulled the plug on this genre of books... seeking refuge in romance and other topics.

But it was no soap! The damage had already been done and the wound was mortal.

Dr. Fredric Wertham's treatise *Seduction Of The Innocent* continually held up Fox titles and their contents as examples of unhealthy images and concepts to which America's youth were exposed. Compared even to today's jaded and violent fare, Fox's post-war body of work is still racy and smutty stuff! But in 1950, forget it... Fox books were practically pornography!!

The end finally came with the comic code in 1954-55, and understandably so. The mythos and violence of Fox's '47' of '47's leave a slightly soiled page in the grand book of comic history, but are time-capsules that remind us of what comics were like when "the gloves were still off." ■

Steve has been a comic collector since 1960 and moved from Silver Age to Golden Age in 1988. He is now primarily interested in World War II era books and pre-code "good girl" art books. In "real life" he is a third generation Hotelier, and operates the Imperial Hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon.

Rulah Checklist And Recent Sales Data

Zoot

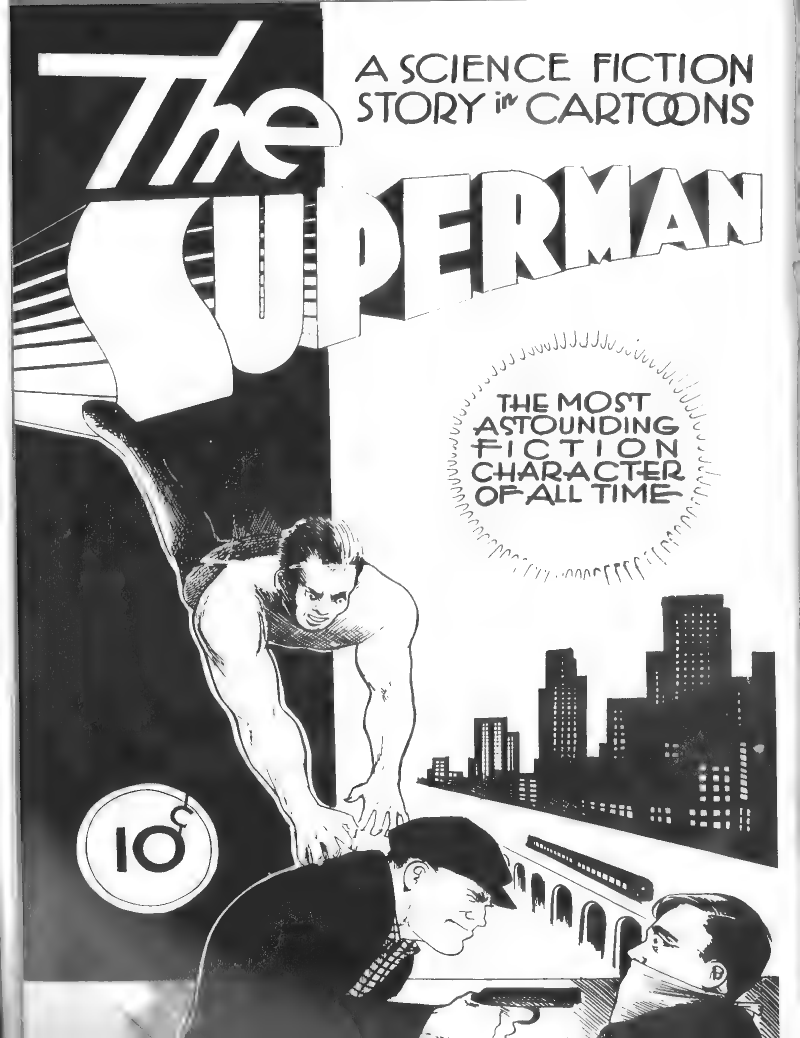
#7 GD $89, FN $225, VG/FN $190, VF+ $595
#8 VG $110
#9 no recent sales data
#10 VF- $240
#11 no recent sales data
#12 FN/VF $210
#13 no recent sales data
#14 FN++ $255, NM- $470
#15 no recent sales data
#16 FN/VF $195

Rulah

#17 GD $110, VG/FN $195, VF $467, VF++ $645
#18 FN $188
#19 VG $95
#20 no recent sales data
#21 FN+ $190, GD- $50, VF/NM $650
#22 FN $195, VF- $295
#23 no recent sales data
#24 FN $140
#25 no recent sales data
#26 VG/FN $98, VF $280
#27 FN- $125, VF $280

All Top

#8 FN $640
#9 GD $115
#10 no recent sales data
#11 VG$180, FN- $920
#12 no recent sales data
#13 VF $580
#14 FN/VF $550, VF/NM $795
#15 no recent sales data
#16 FN $235
#17 GD $50VG 155FN/VF490 VF560


The SUPERMAN
A SCIENCE FICTION STORY in CARTOONS
THE MOST ASTOUNDING FICTION CHARACTER OF ALL TIME
10¢

Siegel & Shuster Presents...
THE SUPERMAN

by Robert Beerbohm

In 1970, when I was still in high school, I used to drive three hours to Adel, Iowa, to do some trading with Dr. Russ Cochran- when he still taught physics at Drake University. Russ always had the coolest material to look through and hopefully acquire. When I got there one time, Russ had just gotten back from New York City where he had been talking some business with Bill Gaines. He had been negotiating for what soon became the *EC Portfoloio One*, the first of six large-size reprints of the original art which he encouraged everybody to treat like a coloring book and see what creativity it might spark. I still have that first issue in which Russ told us to curl up with popcorn and a Dr. Pepper and simply enjoy the splendor that was EC.

He was going back to NYC soon to supervise the copy camera work from the original art- for what would be the first of many EC-oriented projects. (These culminated in the fabulous hard-bound, slip-cased reprinting of the complete output of what many consider the best comic book company there ever has been). Russ was "Mr EC ... and was even E. C. Fan Addict #3, according to his club certificate, issued when Bill started the fan club in the early 1950s. We talked about which would be the coolest stories to start off with- while he showed me his complete EC collection.

Then he grew pretty solemn.

He asked "Would you be interested in taking a gander at something very rare?"

"But of course" was about all I said.

I was sitting in a room surrounded by all kinds of rare comic art and memorabilia. Russ had the original art to an Ingels' *Haunt of Fear* cover as well as a Foster Tarzan and a Raymond Jungle Jim framed on the walls just a few feet from my gaze. I guess he had to say that just in case I was a little unsure of the concept.

He pulled out a folder and went over to the table in the next room, full of more rare comics. He carefully emptied the contents onto this clean surface- four old, raggedy, and dirty pieces of paper that had artwork on them. He then arranged this simple jig-saw puzzle, and I saw the word "Superman" in very large letters- with a guy jumping out of a wall ready to grab a "bad guy" who had a gun pointed at another man who was tied up and gagged. It had a large 10¢" price plug towards the lower left hand corner and below that read "Copyright 1928 Jerome Siegel and Joe Shuster" which was hand-lettered in a small box. It looked rather crude, yet it was incredibly "balanced" so that your eye was drawn into the middle of the cover.

I asked him, "What is this?"

Russ said, "I don't know. Here's a project for you, if you want. I don't collect super hero stuff, and Bill Gaines just gave this to me. Do you want it?" I said something like "What th..." to borrow a time-honored phrase which anybody reading *CBM* should recognize.

Russ then proceeded to tell me the story of how he ended up with it. I actually got goose bumps as I listened.

"It seems Bill Gaines had been up to his mother's place a few months ago, and they finally got around to cleaning out his father's desk. His father was the famous M.C. Gaines of All-American Comics fame. Anyway, his desk sat untouched for twenty years, ever since the boating accident claimed his life back in 1948. It was a big oak desk that had a "floor" inside each file drawer so nothing would fall out into the drawer below it.

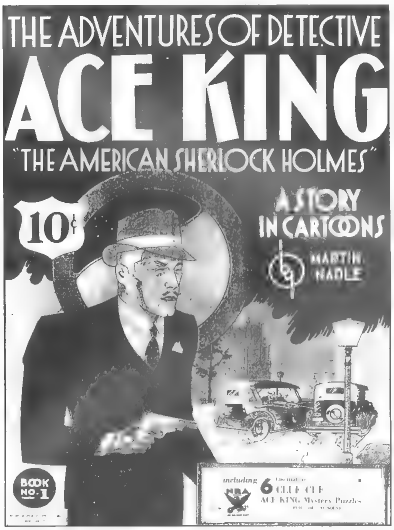
Russ continued

"All the drawers were emptied of their contents, then they were pulled out one at a time, the 'innards' looked at to see what might be hiding in there. In the top right hand drawer were the four pieces to this cover all scrunched up way in the back. Bill Gaines told Russ he pulled them out, looked at them, and brought them back to his apartment. "Deciding that they were not something he desired to keep, he thought I might want them."

Here was a true comics mystery if I ever saw one. So I bit. I think I gave Russ a couple hundred dollars in trade, which is what he wanted for it. I had to have these battered, torn scraps of paper with their valuable art on them.

The Superman cover from 1933, was the team's first attempt at packaging their creation as a comic-strip hero. The inside story was written and drawn but destroyed by Shuster in a fit of depression following rejection.

Once I got back home to Fremont, I sat there and pondered what this new treasure might really be. I talked to people on the phone. I wrote letters. I even took it to Phil Seuling's New York Con in 1970 where people like Larry Ivie and Jerry De Fucchio pondered about the newly found and incredible oddity. There was a consensus reached that it was definitely Circa 1933… and based on the look of the art style, it was most likely the third Superman drawing ever done!



The Adventures of Detective Ace King-original newsstand comic from 1933-billed itself as "a story in cartoons". Siegel and Shuster echoed that phrase- complete with looped "O's"- on their cover for The Superman.

I got back home after my first glorious Fourth-of-July Seuling extravaganza… armed with that concept. It had been fun meeting so many other fans from all over the country. Then I proceeded to the local lithography printer and asked him what could be done to restore this wondrous artifact.

The old printer eye-balled these decrepit pieces, his eyes also betraying the concept that he thought me a tad daft, and took them over to this big light table and got his copy camera out. After a positive was made, he pulled out some ruby" paint and told me to "clean" up (paint out) whatever I did not wish to see in the finished poster. After he gave me a ten-minute lesson in negative opaquing, I spent hours hunched over "my baby" until it was restored… but not redrawn

I then had 500 copies printed up- approximately twice the size of the original art- having a heavy varnish added to protect them for posterity. I advertised them, along with lots of old comics I was constantly acquiring, in G. B. Love's legendary fanzine *Rocket's Blast Comicollector*, asking $1 each (later bumping it up to $3 as my supply slowly dwindled) in an attempt to recover some of my restoration and printing costs.

The Superman of 1933

In mid-1975, when Joe Shuster finally came to his first San Diego Comicon, he graciously signed several dozen of them in the large white area in the middle. These copies were eagerly soaked up by the fans crowded around listening to him talking to us. He would have signed more that day, but I had only brought a few dozen to the show.

I was nervous that he might get mad at me for printing his Superman art without his permission. When I first made that reproduction, I never dreamed I would one day meet the creators of one of my favorite icons at that early San Diego Comicon. Most of comics fandom at that time still did not know that Joe (and Jerry) didn't own any part of Superman, or that there had been quite a few lawsuits and recriminations starting in the mid-1940s when Jerry returned from World War II and discovered that Superboy was appearing in *More Fun Comics* without his knowledge or consent. They fought off and on with DC for a couple of decades and by the mid 1970s decided to go public with their tale of woe.

Organized fandom became truly outraged that year when they learned that Jerry and Joe had actually been poor and basically homeless, while others grossed millions of dollars from their creation. After a decade long battle, creators' rights is now a "norm" in this business with the more progressive publishers. But it wasn't always that way.

There at the SD Con, Joe asked me, "Where did you get this? I haven't seen this in years."

Joe continued "This was the very first cover ever done, when we thought we had a *Superman* comic book sold to the Humor Publishing Company. Humor had just come out with a Cupples & Leon style (10" x 10") format comic book for bookstores and newsstands called *Detective Dan, Secret Operative 48*."

Detective Dan was actually 9-1/2" x 12" and was published in 1933 (see the cover of this issue of *CBM*). It was the first Dick Tracy knock-off, and was created by Norman Marsh. This was an original newsstand publication that in

November, 1933 became the newspaper strip, "Dan Dunn" through the Publisher's Syndicate. Dan Dunn was so popular that it enjoyed a ten-year run.

So this early "Superman" cover was done, replete with a "10¢" plug... and was placed on an entire comic book, written, drawn, inked, and shown to the Humor people by Jerry and Joe when they happened to come through Cleveland (trying to shop *Detective Dan* to the NEA newspaper syndicate)

There was also an alternative rough pencil cover draft which one can view on page 34 of *The Steranko History of Comics*, Volume One, and on on page 9 of the Siegel and Shuster interview in *Nemo* #2.

Jerry and Joe soon got a letter back saying that Humor would be interested in doing it... that they were in fact "ecstatic" about the idea! The boys from Cleveland thought they had really hit pay dirt.

Shortly thereafter, Humor Publishing reneged on the deal. It was the first of many heartbreaks for the boys over the next few years as they shopped the Superman idea to literally everybody in the business of publishing comics... either newspapers or the "new" medium of comic books. Five long years they kept at it before Shelly Mayer talked M. C. (Max) Gaines into running it past Vincent Sullivan... who, as editor, decided to make it the cover feature of DC's fourth regular newsstand anthology book... *Action Comics*!

Joe said he got so depressed worrying that his art might not be good enough, that he ripped it all up and threw it into the fireplace. He was convinced the reason for the rejection was that his art work was too amateurish for the "big time" publishers. He resolved to do better next time, and he didn't want this first incarnation around to remind him of the rejections.

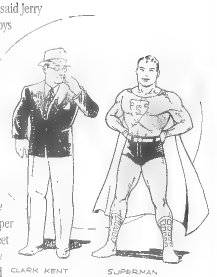
Enter Jerry, who miraculously saved the cover before it got burned. Somehow the pieces ended up, battered, bruised, and smashed up inside the back of a drawer in Max Gaines's desk. How these ripped up cover pieces got there is still one of the two unsolved questions of this twenty-five-year-old mystery.

Super Inspirations

The other unsolved question is why the original cover obtained from Russ Cochran says "Copyright 1928." My hunch is that maybe, just maybe, there is an extremely early primitive Superman incarnation in the now-lost first Jerry Siegel science fiction fanzine called *Cosmic Stories*, that is supposed to have started around that year. *Cosmic Stories* holds the distinction of being the first science fiction fanzine ever produced. Jerry Siegel couldn't have made more than 50 hectograph copies- as that is the maximum this precursor to the ditto machine would allow before wearing out its jell.

It was "strictly a typewritten... publication," said Jerry in the last interview ever done with the boys together, published in August 1983. There are no known copies of *Cosmic Stories* in existence, which would make this rarest of all fanzines the ultimate item for the Superman completist to try to acquire.

These two teenage boys were trying to protect their copyright. They didn't want to run afoul of Philip Wylie, who had come out with *Gladiator* sometime earlier, which was a groundbreaker Superman esque concept novel, as well as *Doc Savage* which proclaimed the Man of Bronze as a "superman" in advertising that was appearing in Street & Smith pulps during Doc's launch in 1933. By pre-dating these other creations, they would avoid possible legal entanglements. It is worth noting that Joe Shuster changed the 1928 date to 1935 while signing copies at the 1975 San Diego Comicon.



The first appearance of Clark Kent was in this 1934-1935 drawing.

Also, I have recently uncovered a letter of comment from a 14-year-old Jerry Siegel- complete with his full home address of 10622 Kimberly Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio, that appeared in Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* in the August, 1929 issue *Amazing* was the first science fiction magazine, starting in 1926. His letter appeared approximately one year before Jerry met Joe. In it, Jerry displays a deep knowledge of science fiction from a great many pulp sources. It is entirely probable he was in contact with many other early fans- since "Discussions" printed full addresses. In an excerpt from the letter, he requests the possibility that the editors might

"...reprint A. Merritt's story, "Through the Dragon Glass," which appeared in *All-Story Magazine* years ago... I buy, every issue of *Argosy*, *Weird Tales*, and *Our Magazine* as they appear..." From the tone of the letter, he seemed to live and breathe "scientifiction" as Hugo Gernsback originally coined the term.

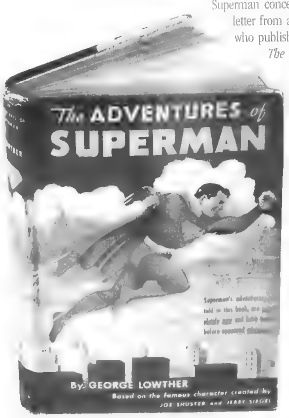
The first issue of *Science Fiction*, the later Siegel and

DETECTIVE DAN & DETECTIVE ACE KING

Humor Publishing Company produced *Detective Dan, Secret Operative 48*, as well as another original newsstand comic book that was the same 9 1/2 x 12 size format, *The Adventures of Detective Ace King*. Both came out in early 1933. Both were Dick Tracy knock-offs, and both were one shots.

The pioneering Humor Publishing Company has been completely overlooked by all the history books despite the significance of having published original newsstand comic books in 1933! It doesn't matter that they did not sell very well. What matters is they were early publishing pioneers, and greater attention should be afforded their efforts. In this regard, this "prototype comic book company" deserves its rightful place in comic book history. I think their only error was not picking the format invented by Wildenberg and Gaines later that year. Because of the forced closure of the company, *The Detective Dan* and *Detective Ace King* books are extremely rare.

Shuster fanzine, contains a very enthusiastic review of "King Kong" when it was a brand new film. The third issue has "The Reign of the Super-man", a text story on the Superman concept, and also contains a letter from a young Julius Schwartz, who published an early SF fanzine, *The Time Traveler*, along with Mort Weisinger- both famous for their stewardships of The Man From Krypton some years later. Another issue reviewed Philip Wylie's *Gladiator* novel, which contains much of the Superman mythos, and is well worth picking up to further the Superman scholar's understanding of where the inspirations came from.



Joe Shuster's cover art for the 1942 Random House hardback, *The Adventures of Superman*, is a memorable image of the Man of Tomorrow in flight.

To quote Jerry from his 1981 *Nemo* interview "A couple of months after I published this story, it occurred to me that a Superman as a hero rather than a villain might make a great comic strip character in the vein of Tarzan, only more super and sensational than that great character. Joe and I drew it up as a comic book- this was in early 1933."

The influences on Jerry, as well as Joe, as they honed the Superman concept, are many. R. C. Harvey reports in his wonderful book, *The Art of The Funnies* (1994, University of Mississippi Press), that: "Gil Kane, who began his comic book career in the early forties, once chanted a litany of credit to (Roy) Crane before an audience at the San Diego Comic Convention: 'Superman was Captain Easy,' he said: 'Batman was Easy.' And he listed several more characters before he stopped… Anyone familiar with the earlier work of Superman's creators … will recognize Easy in Slam Bradley, a character the two invented a year or so before Superman saw print. Bradley even had a diminutive sidekick a lot like Wash Tubbs. And Superman/Clark Kent looked a lot like Slam Bradley…

Just as Roy Crane introduced new conventions to the concept of adventure strips for the newspapers, it was Joe Shuster who pioneered them for the fledgling newsstand comic book, being the first one to break out of the mold of many small panels per page.

In the interview in *Nemo* #2, Joe Shuster said: "Jerry often says that Slam Bradley was really the forerunner of Superman, because we turned it out with no restrictions, complete freedom to do what we wanted. . Slam Bradley was a dry run for Superman. Superman had already been created, and we didn't want to give away the Superman idea but we just couldn't resist putting into Slam Bradley some of the slam bang stuff which we knew would be in Superman… if and when we got Superman launched."

The New York Times article published November 25, 1975 (that mainly delves into the team's economic plight of the time) said it well:

"Douglas Fairbanks Sr., the silent film star who never let a stunt man stand in for him in the dazzling scenes in which he played Robin Hood and other swashbuckling heroes, was an idol to both Siegel and Shuster, who were then high school students in Cleveland.

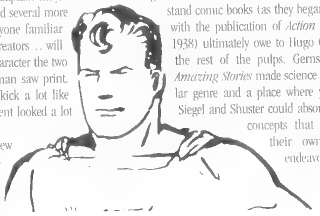
"One night the actor's acrobatics gave Siegel an idea.

"A creature born on another planet, impervious to the laws of gravity and stronger than an army tank, would come to earth as a baby, be reared in an orphanage, and grow up into a Superman whose consuming passion would be to right the wrongs of the world."

Their influences were many, running the full gamut of popular culture as it unfolded around them, absorbing it like any impressionable young minds during their "Golden Age" of expanding awareness.

The History Of Tomorrow

I still remember the goose bumps I felt long ago at Seuling's Comicon, when I first realized what that Superman cover prototype really was: one of the most important and rarest Superman items ever created. The first cover that came so soon after "The Reign of the Super-man" appeared in their mimeo science fiction fanzine. I'm sure Jerry and Joe would appreciate acknowledgment of the tremendous debt that original newsstand comic books (as they began to proliferate with the publication of *Action Comics* #1 in 1938) ultimately owe to Hugo Gernsback and the rest of the pulps. Gernsback and his *Amazing Stories* made science fiction a popular genre and a place where youngsters like Siegel and Shuster could absorb the fabulous concepts that would inspire their own imaginative endeavors. ■



AACC Sponsorship
Kurt Schaffenberger To Attend San diego Comic Con

As reported in the last newsletter, this year the AACC will be sponsoring Kurt Schaffenberger at the San Diego Comic Con International. Schaffenberger is a prolific artist whose career spanned both the Golden Age and Silver Age. In the early 1940s, he worked on the "Black Owl" in Prize Comics, as well as various Fawcett characters such as Bulletman, Captain Marvel, and Spy Smasher. His classic rendering of DC Silver Age characters such as Superman, Lois Lane, and others are fondly cherished by DC enthusiasts.

The members of AACC would like to publicly thank the "tenacious" Dave Siegel for his initiative in bringing this comic book super star to a national forum where he can interact with his many fans.

Some AACC members have already sent in contributions. Several have asked what to do if they cannot afford a full sponsorship of $150, simple! Please contribute what you can, $5, $25, or $50. Many of last years contributions were at this level. Please get your contributions in soon as the convention has been moved up to the July 4th 1996 weekend. All sponsors names will be published in the AACC quarterly newsletter.

Please send Schaffenberger sponsorship support to:
American Association Of Comicbook Collectors (AACC)
Schaffenberger Sponsorship
P.O. Box 151029 • San Diego • California • 92175

PIONEER COMIC DEALER ROBERT BELL

BY LEWIS FORRO

THIS INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED IN JANUARY 1996.

PHOTO OF BELL which originally accompanied a news story in the "Ft. Lauderdale News" dated January 6, 1977.

As a young boy growing up in Savannah, Georgia (some 25 years ago) I was diligently working to complete my Marvel Comic collection. Today I can still clearly remember the delicious anticipation of waiting for the mailman to deliver one of those badly needed packages of Marvel back issues. Most of those packages came from a man who lived in the far away and strange sounding city of Hauppauge, New York. His name was Robert Bell and anybody who collected comics in those days knows that name. Bell was a pioneering comic book dealer who invented the ancestor of what all comic collectors use today, the comic book protective bag. After completing my Marvel comic collection around 1971 I lost contact with Mr. Bell. Then two years ago at a comic book convention in Philadelphia dealer Gary Dolgoff mentioned to me that he and his partners had bought out the Bell comic warehouse in the middle 1980s. Documenting Bell's observations on the early days of comic collecting seemed like a worthy mission. With a lead provided by Gary Dolgoff, I traced Robert Bell to Pompano Beach, Florida. He has been selling beach front property in addition to owning a shopping center, Bell Plaza, in Pompano Beach since selling his comic business in 1980. He was delighted to hear from one of his old customers and graciously consented to this interview.

Lewis Forro: *Bob, when you were born and where did you grow up?*

Robert Bell: I was born in Sunnyside Queens (NY) in 1943. That's about 20 minutes from Manhattan.

Lewis: *As a youngster, were you a comic book collector or reader?*

Robert: Well I really wasn't really a big, big reader but I did read them. It wasn't like I was a fanatic reader, I wasn't.

Lewis: *How did you get started as a dealer?*

Robert: My dad and mom owned a book store and a thrift shop combination in Sunnyside. My dad used to sell comic books for 3¢ apiece and 4 for 10¢. They were back issues. He would buy them from distributors in bundles of 100 and he would pay like a penny each and have to buy 100 of each number. Of course he couldn't sell 100

so we got stuck with about 50. He didn't buy the new books. He only bought returns from distributors... he was selling them for 3¢ a piece, they were selling for 10¢ each at full retail. This is back in the late 1950s.

The 50 copies or so that they got stuck with were put in the basement of the store. So in time you can imagine how many issues accumulated. There were thousands of issues in that basement. I would say 10 to 20 thousand. There were even EC and Walt Disney comics ... and of course DC comics... *Superman, Batman*, and all the rest. Marvel wasn't very big at that time. In fact the pre-hero Marvels weren't very popular and they were hard to get rid of. But the ECs sold really well.

Then one day somebody came to the shop and said they were looking for a particular issue of EC comics and that they were willing to pay 25¢ each instead of 3¢ each. I thought "they were willing to pay a crazy price of 25¢ each ... wow, this is unbelievable." That was in the late '50s or early '60s. This guy and I spent half a day looking through all these books trying to find any ECs at a quarter each! Then more came to buy comics. Another guy wanted old Disney comics and he was willing to pay 15¢ apiece! We thought they were nuts!

Lewis: *Were you managing the store for your dad then?*

Robert: I was just helping out. It was my dad's game at the time. I was about 17 or so. I would go down and pick through a few books, bring up ten books, and collect $2.50. That was a lot of money then and my dad thought it was too high a price. He would say, "You shouldn't charge people so much money." I defended by saying, "I didn't ask that much ... they offered it!"

After about maybe a year or so people started asking for certain back issues. I decided to take the time and rearrange all the books so I wouldn't have to look all day long for ten issues. When I decided to put everything in order it was a really big job because there were thousands and thousands and thousands of issues... by this time maybe 20, 30, 40,000 books easy. This is still in the late '50s and early '60s and it probably took months to organize everything.

I built the shelves, and I arranged everything so I could have everything in order. Then when somebody came in and said they wanted *Walt Disney Comics and Stories*, I would go downstairs and within five minutes I'd come up with everything we had. So that's how it all started.

I eventually found out that the EC issues were very popular, and the price went up to $1 each. People didn't balk at this price, because they were in such demand. Actually I never created a price ... never on the comic books. The market—the people in the market—created the price. They told me what to charge.

Lewis: *And the demand was mostly for EC and Disney?*

Robert: Well, EC, Disney, and DC. But I remember ECs being like one of the most in demand collectibles back then. I would say most of the material in the basement was Silver Age and early to mid 1950s.

Lewis: *How did your store come about?*

Robert: In 1961 my dad decided to retire... I was about 18 years old at the time. I opened my own shop in Sunnyside about three blocks away from dad's old shop.

Lewis: *Did your dad help you get started?*

Robert: No ... in those days you could start your own business for $500 to 1,000. It wasn't a lot of money in today's terms ... it was a pretty good sum back then, but it was still do-able. The mailing address was Woodside, but the shop itself was considered Sunnyside. Back then I did as much business in paperback books (used paperback books) as I did in comic books.

Lewis: *Did you carry old Playboy magazines?*

Robert: Yes, I remember selling the first *Playboy* edition for $100 and I thought that was an unbelievable amount of money. It was like Fine to Near Mint copy.

FRONT PAGE
of Bell's catalog from August 1, 1978. Notice the bells on the characters' chests and the bottom paragraph noting Bell's personal mint Marvel collection for sale

ROBERT BELL was noted for having numerous multiple copies of Silver Age Marvels, as the photo below illustrates. Photo originally published in the newspaper *Suffolk Life*.

Lewis: *How did you finally get involved in mail order?*

Robert: Basically I had customers coming from Virginia and Florida and elsewhere. They must have been tourists, but they would come into the store and buy a lot of books. They often said "Gee, I wish we had a store like yours in our home town!" So I suggested that they send me their want lists. That's really how the mail order business got started. That was still the early '60s.

Lewis: *What percentage of the your business was mail order?*

Robert: The initial mail order was very small. But over the years it just kept building and building. In the beginning it wasn't very much.

Lewis: *Who else do you remember as being involved in comic books in the New York area about that time?*

Robert: Gary Dolgoff, Peter Koch, and Howard Rogofsky. There was also Grand Book and Passaic. We all kind of got started pretty close to the same time. I don't know how it really happened, but we all got started within I would say a year or two of each other.

Lewis: *Did you and the other New York dealers have a "local fraternity" where you could trade books with each other like they did out in Los Angeles?*

Robert: We did, yes. Howard Rogofsky used to come into my shop all the time and he would have a want list with the amounts people would be willing to pay for certain issues. I would have a whole wall full of books, many on his list. He would just come in and say "I'll take that and that, and that, and that." If my price was $4 to $5, Howard could double his money when he sold them. I would discount some depending on how much money Howard spent. Passaic Books bought books too.

Lewis: *Did you occasionally swap with other dealers?*

Robert: Gary Dolgoff and Peter Koch bought from me, and I bought from them. If I had a surplus of books and Gary needed them, he would come and buy from me. And if he had the surplus, I would buy from him. It was very close knit . . . everybody knew everybody . . . it was great.

Lewis: *When did you move to Long Island?*

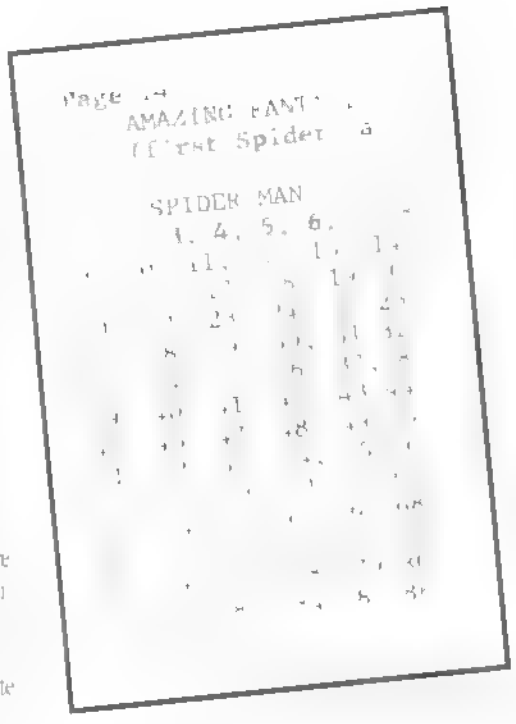
Robert: I moved to Long Island in 1969. I bought a house and decided I'd do a mail order out of it. I started with one bedroom, then after a year expanded into the dining room and then I into the living room, then into my garage. This was over about five years. Then about 1978 or so I moved from New York to Florida. When I got to Florida I got a 1500 sq. ft. warehouse. I worked out of there for a few years and then moved to a 2,500 sq. ft. warehouse in about 1981. I worked there until I sold the business to Gary Dolgoff in about 1986 or '87.

Lewis: *You are known as one of the earliest dealers to run ads in Marvel Comics. What prompted you to make such a pioneering move?*

Robert: I was in my shop and was basically selling DC comics at the time . . . this was in the early 1960s. A customer came in and said "there's a new company out called Marvel Comics!" He brought in a few issues and as I looked them over I inaccurately predicted "they'll never make it . . . DC is too big!"

After that Marvel Comics became very popular, to say the least. As people started coming in looking for Marvel Comics back issues, I thought "why not advertise in the comics?" What most don't know is that I also advertised in DC comics. The first ads went to Marvel (because Marvel was popular), but Robert Bell ads were also placed in DC comics as well.

Lewis: *Bob, I'm looking at one of your price lists from 1972. You've got the Golden Age comics individually graded, but all the Marvel Comics were not indi-*


Page
AMAZING FANT
First Spider
SPIDER MAN

TWO INSIDE PAGES from the 1971 "Marvel Comic Check List" which Bell invented to help customers keep track of their collections.

vidually graded. Did you ever get around to assigning individual grades to Marvel Comics after 1972?

Robert: Right now I'm looking at a catalog from 1977 and it shows that I did not individually grade books then. In 1977, mint comics were available at 100% more. In other words, if I was a $5 book, you could order a Mint copy for $10. For instance in 1977 *Fantastic Four* #1 was going for $225. In Mint that would be $450.

In the early 1970s, collectors were much less concerned with the condition. They would want GD or VG or better and they weren't really concerned. To me, it was only in the late 1970s that people started saying, "I want Fine or better" or "I want Near Mint or Mint."

Lewis: *In 1971 I bought a VG copy of Fantastic Four #1 from you for $30. If I had asked for a higher grade copy and offered to pay you, you would have come up with one?*

Robert: Right. If you wanted a higher grade, it would have been probably not 100% at that point, about 50%.

Lewis: *I wasn't smart enough to ask for a better one.*

Robert: Most people didn't care about the condition at that time. It wasn't important. The important thing was to get the book.

Lewis: *You had a lot of pre-Marvels in your early 1970s price lists — more so than most dealers. Did you have those leftover from your dad's store?*

Robert: They were overstocks and we had a bunch of them. We wound up selling them (I think) for $1 or $1.50.

Lewis: *I spent most of the 1970s trying to chase those books down. They were tough to find, especially in high grade. I guess most of yours were pretty nice.*

Robert: Most of them were Fine or better, yeah. In 1977, for instance, we had *Tales Of Suspense* #4 for $10.

Lewis: *When did you start pricing books by the Guide?*

Robert: When the *Price Guide* first came out in 1970-'71, it really wasn't taken very seriously, and it was just another fan publication. But about three to five years after it came out, people really went by it. Bob Overstreet contacted me then, and I ended up as the first advertiser. I took the back cover ad. He said he had a tough time getting advertisers back then ... but I thought he had a good product pretty much right from the start. I advertised in all the issues from #1 on up for maybe 10 to 15 years. I either had the back cover or the inside cover. I don't recall which one.

Lewis: *How much did that premium ad slot cost in those days?*

Robert: In the beginning it cost practically nothing—probably $100 or something like that ... maybe $150. It eventually hit $1,000.

Lewis: *How did you acquire most of your comics?*

Robert: By the time I got involved in the mail order end of it, I had so many people that I was dealing with and so many names that knew me that when they got tired of their collection they would sell it to me ... back then ... I had collections coming in left and right.

Lewis: *Did you make a big effort to run ads in mainstream newspapers or magazines?*

Robert: No, I didn't really have to because I was generally well known at that time and people would contact me, often by word of mouth.

Lewis: *Did you buy any distributor warehouses or famous collections?*

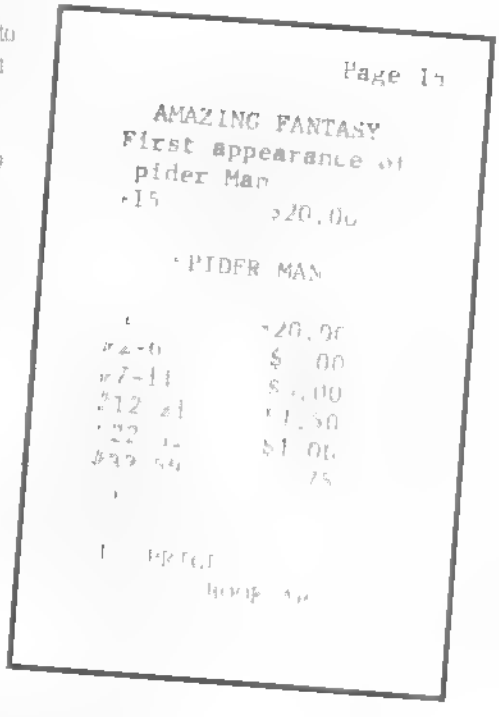
Robert: The biggest thing I did, I guess, was when Marvel Mania went out of business. They contacted me and I bought thousands and thousands of posters. I had all the *Fantastic Four* and so forth. I bought out their entire warehouse, about 20,000 posters.

Lewis: *Did you sell them in bulk to dealers or piece meal to collectors?*

Robert: Mostly piece meal. I advertised in *TV Guide* and on the radio. *TV Guide* was probably the biggest. That was in the '70s.

Lewis: *I never see those posters offered for sale at conventions or anywhere.*

Robert: They were kind of brittle. The poster was


Page 15
AMAZING FANTASY
First appearance of
Spider Man
SPIDER MAN

made of a paper that would rip when you took at it. It wasn't posterboard. It was glossy paper. I think there was a total of eight different posters. Captain America was one of the rare ones and then Fantastic Four, Thor, Hulk, and Dr. Strange. Captain America was one of the rarer ones.

Lewis: *Did you charge extra for the Cap poster?*

Robert: No, that came in a set.

Lewis: *How long did it take to sell them?*

Robert: Just a few years.

Lewis: *I don't see how 20,000 posters can vanish off the face of the Earth. I just never see them for sale anywhere.*

Robert: I'd like to have a nice one framed today myself.

Lewis: *I imagine you might regret not keeping some of your comics as well.*

Robert: The only thing I regret is I had a complete Marvel collection to about 1980 in perfect condition… but I sold it. It was my personal collection. That's the only thing I wish I still had. I think that would be really great to have today.

Lewis: *Was that part of the Dolgoff deal?*

Robert: No, no this was an individual thing. It was really quite spectacular. I sold it to a private collector in the late 1970s. It was something I wish I had today. Whenever a new Mint book came in I would compare it to my Mint copy and keep the best. That set was really pristine! Well anyway, you can't get too upset with yourself about the past.

Lewis: *Do any of the many collections you've turned up over the years stand out in your memory?*

Robert: Well yes … I used to advertise on the radio and in different publications… even newspapers… I advertised all over. One time I remember a lady called me from upstate NY as I had been advertising on this radio station, looking to buy old comic books. She called me and said "you know I have a box of books, and I'd like to sell them."

I was up in that area visiting my brother in Monroe, NY, and she invited me to come over to her house and look through this box… so I did. The box contained about 100-200 books. I bought the books and was about to leave when she said "I was walking out the door with this box and my son suggested that they might be worth some money. He heard your ad on the radio and that's why I called you."

I gave her $3,000 for the lot … way more than she wanted … $3,000 was a lot back then. Her collection included *Walt Disney Comics And Stories* #1, 2, and 3 in Near Mint condition, *Superman* #2-6, and some others that I don't remember now. I especially remember that buy because all the books were in such incredible shape… and she said that before her son told her about my radio ad, she had intended to throw the comics away!

That find was the early '70s. I sold them off and of course when I sold them I made some money … but if I had them today… I would sure make a lot more money (laughter).

Lewis: *Any more like that?*

Robert: Well, you know it's so hard to remember everything… things that were insignificant then have become very significant now. I can remember going to a bazaar and finding *Fantastic Four* #1-10 in perfect shape .10¢ each. This is going back into the early '60s when *Fantastic Four* #1 might have been worth $10 or $20, but even then it was quite a find to buy something worth $10 for 10¢.

Lewis: *Since you were in the comic book business quite early, and for over 25 years, let me ask you to tell me how many copies of certain books you've had over the years… How about* Detective *#27?*

Robert: Three to five copies.

Lewis: *Action #1?*

Robert: I think I had only one copy, but it was below fine. I bought it from a collector.

Lewis: *Marvel Comics #1?*

Robert: I don't think I've ever had that one.

Lewis: *Superman #1?*

Robert: I had two copies of *Superman* #1: one was in fair condition and one was in fine condition.

Lewis: *Batman #1?*

Robert: I had an ultra high grade copy; one that will never ever go out of my mind, because I sold it in Florida. I left New York to come to Florida on vacation and this guy kept calling me from Wisconsin and he wanted to buy that copy. I was in a Howard Johnson's hotel and this guy brings in this copy of *Batman* #1 in really perfect condition. He asked $1,000 for it and we eventually agreed on $700. I was excited, but now I wish I still had it. That was before 1979; it had to be because, if I recall, the high Guide price was about $1,200, and I sold it for $1,000 (laugher).

I can't say I had multiple copies of any of the really key Golden Age books, but I did have a lot of the *Marvel Mystery Comics* and things like that. I had a lot of

Examples of the now collectible "Bell Money" printed in 1971. Each bill featured a photograph of a family member.

Human Torch in especially high grade. I had multiple copies of the Golden Age *Daredevil* #1 (Battles Hitler). I sold them for $700 each. I had about ten of those. I also had *Daredevil* #3 and 4 and they went for around $200 and $150 or so. I had about ten of each of those two *Daredevil* issues as well. I really remember those. That was in the mid-'70s.

Lewis: *And Silver Age?*

Robert: I had between 100 and 200 copies of *Fantastic Four* #1 over the years, but when I say 100, 200, I could have had 100 in the first year that they came out, and I was getting $1 and $2 a piece for them. Those would have been mostly Mint because they were virtually new at the time.

Lewis: *How many FF #1s did you have in your shop?*

Robert: At one time I probably had 50 copies of *Fantastic Four* #1 in Mint or very close to it. Over the years another 150 maybe. I'd say about 200 copies total. Toward the end, though, they were probably averaging at Very Good to Fine condition. But in the '60s and early '70s, they were higher grade. But then towards 1980 the high grades went down.

Lewis: *Spider-Man #1?*

Robert: I would say *Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* were pretty similar. Lots of high grade *Spider* #1s.

Lewis: *Surely Amazing Fantasy #15 wasn't that common.*

Robert: *Amazing Fantasy* #15 was tougher. I would say I didn't have more than 50 copies in my whole career. At one time, maybe a dozen. Maybe three were Very Fine or Near Mint. Most of them were pretty shabby. That's a hard book to get in high grade, because people really didn't pay that much attention to the book until later.

Lewis: *It's worth more than all the other Marvels put.*

Robert: What is the price on it right now?

Lewis: *The Near Mint Guide on it now is $22,000.*

Robert: I think *Amazing Fantasy* #15 should be the most valuable.

Lewis: *How about* Journey Into Mystery *#83?*

Robert: #83 is another tough one... I would say probably I had only about 50 copies total over the entire period. You see the thing is when a number 1 issue came out, everybody saved it. #83 wasn't as easy as the #1s. At one time I had probably 15 or 20 copies. Maybe one-third were in higher grades.

Lewis: *X-Men #1?*

Robert: *X-Men* #1. I had quite a few. Between 150 and 200 copies. At one time, I'd say 25 to 50. At least half were high grade.

Lewis: *Avengers #1?*

Robert: *Avengers* #1 would be high, about 200 copies, similar to *X-Men*.

Lewis: *And finally, DareDevil #1?*

Robert: *Daredevil* #1 probably even more than that. I'd say 200 to 300. At one time, I had 50 and over half were high grade. Also I used to really like *Conan*, and I always had a lot of *Conans*. I'd have 100 #1s at a time.

Lewis: *Wasn't* Conan *#1 the first book that dealers and collectors speculated on by hoarding it?*

Robert: Yeh I think so.

Lewis: *Any other earlier Marvels that you might have had a big stock of?*

Robert: I had a big stock of *Daredevil* #4 & *X-Men* #10.

Lewis: *How did you come across so many?*

Robert: Distributors, overstocks, or somehow they didn't sell. *Daredevil* #4 and *X-Men* #10. Those are the two that really come to mind.

Lewis: *Were there any Marvels you couldn't find?*

Robert: No, I really never had any problem supplying them... because I had a big collector base. Back then, I could honestly say that if somebody was looking for something and I didn't have it, I'd could have it within a few weeks or a month. I had a good market as far as finding the books was concerned.

Lewis: *How about* Showcase *#4?*

Robert: I didn't have a lot of those either, but I did have complete *Showcase* for sale. I remember selling them here and there. I also remember selling complete EC sets. The individual issues were very cheap then... 25, 50, $1.00 a piece... something like that. They weren't expensive.

BELL PRICE LIST from January 1, 1971. Books were not individually graded then. Note *Amazing Fantasy* #15 is less than *Fantastic Four* #1

Lewis: *You'd have an entire run of* Weird Science *or* Weird Fantasy?

Robert: A complete EC wasn't really very hard to do then. That was in the early '60s or even the late '50s when I first got started with the EC's. I remember a guy in France used to send me $10, and I would send him 40 EC comics AND pay the postage myself! All he cared about was pre-code EC comics, and he wanted anything I could find — 40 for $10, postage to France included. He would do this several times a month if I could supply him. I think $2 or $3 postage to France, so I would be selling 40 books for $8, or 20¢ a book. This was in the late '50's. He might still be there; I don't know.

Lewis: *I want to ask you about what you had in your Florida warehouse when you sold out to Mr Dolgoff in 1986. I believe you had about 250,000 comics in it when you sold it.*

Robert: That's right.

Lewis: *Can you give me a rough percentage by publisher?*

Robert: I would say that in my warehouse I had about 75% Marvels, 20% DC and 5% miscellaneous.

Lewis: *Of the Marvels, how many were from the 1960s?*

Robert: 25% from the 1960s, 25% from the 1970s and 50% from the 1980s.

Lewis: *Which titles did you have the most of?*

Robert: The ones that come to mind were *Web of Spider-Man*. I probably had 1,000 to 2,000 of every issue for the first 20 issues. Also *Peter Parker The Spectacular Spider-Man*. Those are the ones that come to mind. But I had lots of many issues.

Lewis: *I'd like to know how well stocked your warehouse was with more collectible Marvels, like the ones from 1961-65.*

Robert: I had 20 or 30 copies of *Daredevil* #1s. Only about a dozen *Fantastic Four* #1s. I had a pretty good stock of the early 1960s Marvels. But when I say a good stock, I would say anywhere from 10 to 30 issues of any given main per [illegible]

Lewis: *How well stocked were you on early issues of* Spider-Man?

Robert: From #19 on I had a lot of them, especially #33 and a few other [illegible] like that. I had a good stock [illegible] #10 I would say three to ten issues each.

Lewis: *How is it that you had so many copies of* Spider-Man *#33?*

Robert: I really don't know. #33 seems to be one that sticks in my mind. I had a lot of those. When I sold the warehouse I had [illegible] 50 copies.

Lewis: *Were you going to comic con ventions as well?*

Robert: The first show that I ever went to was a Phil Seuling show back — probably the end of '60s sometime. These were held around July 4th once a year in New York at [illegible] and I would help my mom and dad would help me out with this great big booth. Back then I had a ton of really, really nice high grade Golden Age and Silver Age... it was a wonderful time, as you can imagine.

Anyway, when the doors opened, people [illegible] my mom had hundreds of dollars in their hands. They didn't have their money in their wallet; they actually had it in their hands like you were holding a bou-

PRICES GOOD UNTIL JAN. 1, 1971

Marvel Comics

PRICES ARE PER ISSUE. ALL BOOKS ARE IN GOOD CONDITION
ORDERS UNDER $5.00 ADD .50¢ FOR POSTAGE & HANDLING.

AMAZING FANTASY
#15 $23.00

AVENGERS
#1 $9.00
#2-7 $3.50
#8-13 $1.50
#14-77 .50

BRAND ECHH
#1-13 .50

CAPTAIN MARVEL
#1 $1.50
#2-21- [illegible]

CAPT. SAVAGE
#1-20- .50

DAREDEVIL
#1 $9.00
#2,3 $2.50
#4-8 $1.00
#9-65- .50

FANTASTIC FOUR
#1 $35.00
#2,3,4 $17.00
#5,6 $13.00
#7-13 $8.00
#14-21 $3.00
#22-28 $2.00
#29-40 $1.00
#41-100- .50

GHOST RIDER
#1-7 .50

HULK
#1 $16.00
#2-4 $5.00
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IRON MAN
#1 $1.50
#2-27- .50

PLEASE LIST
ALTERNATE CHOICES

IRON MAN AND
SUB-MARINER
#1 $1.50

JOURNEY INTO
MYSTERY (THOR)
#83 $3.00
#84 $7.00
#85-94 $3.00
#95-119 $1.00
#120-[illegible]

AGENT OF SHEILD
#1 $1.00
#2-15- .50

SGT FURY
#1 $13.00
#2,3 $4.00
#4-13 $1.00
#14-79- .50

SPIDER MAN
#1 $20.00
#2,3 $10.00
#4-8 $3.00
#9-22 $1.50
#23-33 $1.00
#34-60 [illegible]
#61-86 [illegible]

STRANGE TALES
#101 $5.00
#102 $4.00
#103-116 $1.00
#117-[illegible]

SUB-MARINER
#1 $1.50
#2-27- .50

TALES TO ASTONISH
(HULK)
#27 $17.00
#35 $5.00
#36 $4.00
#37-41 $2.50
#42-50 $1.50
#51-129- .50

TALES OF SUSPENSE
#39 $10.00
#40,41 $4.00
#42-47 $2.00
#48-63 $1.00
#64-127- .50

X-MEN
#1 $7.00
#2-4 $2.50
#5-11 $1.00
#12-66 .50

ANNUALS AND SPECIALS
AVENGERS
#1,2 $1.50
#3 .75

DAREDEVIL
#1 $1.50

FANTASTIC FOUR
#1 $8.00
#2,3 $4.00
#4,5 $1.50
#6,7 $1.00

FANTASY MASTERPIECES
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MARVEL SUPER HEROES
#12-27- .75

HULK (ANNUAL)
#1 $1.50

MARVEL COLLECTORS
ITEM CLASSICS
#1,2 $2.00
#3-27- .75

TALES TO ASTONISH-MARVEL TALES
#1 $6.00
#2 $2.00
#3-27- .75

SGT. FURY
#1,2 $1.00
#3,4- .25

ANNUALS AND SPECIALS
(continued)
SPIDER MAN
#1 $5.00
#2,3 $2.
#4-6 $1.50

SILVER SURFER
#1-7 $2.
#8-17 $1.00

STRANGE TALES
#1 $8.00
#2 $3.00

SUPER HEROES
#1 $2.00

TALES OF ASGARD
#1 $1.00

THOR
#1,2 $2.00

SPIDER MAN SPECTACULAR
#1 $3.00
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THE FOUR TITLES LISTED
BELOW ARE 75¢ PER BOOK
CHAMBER OF DARKNESS
KING KID
TOWER OF SHADOWS
WHERE MONSTERS DWELL

PLASTIC COMIC BAGS MADE
TO PROTECT YOUR COMICS
$3.00 PER HUNDRED
TWO SIZES, MARVEL OR
GOLDEN AGE. SEND FOR
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quet of flowers. They spent so much money so fast that I couldn't even put my money in the wallet. I would have to just stuff my money pockets, just stuff it in pockets. Books were selling for $1, $2, $5, whatever it was ... it wasn't that they were selling for $100 a piece, they were actually mostly inexpensive books. But all the collectors back then saved all year and each one of them had $25-100 in their hand and they wanted to spend all that money right away! And they did!

Lewis: *Were these collectors mostly teenagers or adults?*

Robert: I would say the average age of these collectors was about 20 years old. They were serious comic book collectors that lived in the New York area. And the difference from today and then is today you have a comic convention every week, so people are not excited about it. Then you had it once a year. They saved all year round to go to that convention and they bought any books that they were missing as fast as they could find them. They were also very affordable then even the keys.

Lewis: *Any other special memories from the convention circuit in those days?*

Robert: I remember Carl Barks ... you know Carl Barks the Walt Disney artist?

Lewis: *Sure.*

Robert: Well I was at a convention in Arizona in the late 1960s. These Barks paintings were being auctioned and I knew that no matter what I bid on a painting somebody would outbid me because ... I'm a dealer and some would think "if Bob Bell is going to pay a lot of money, it's just got to be worth twice that because he's going to sell it." So I tried to do a closed bid but they wouldn't let me do it. Anyway, the Barks paintings were going for about $800 and I would have gladly paid $800 dollars. I still wish I had gotten one of those paintings.

Lewis: *They cost hundreds of thousands now.*

Robert: See what I mean?

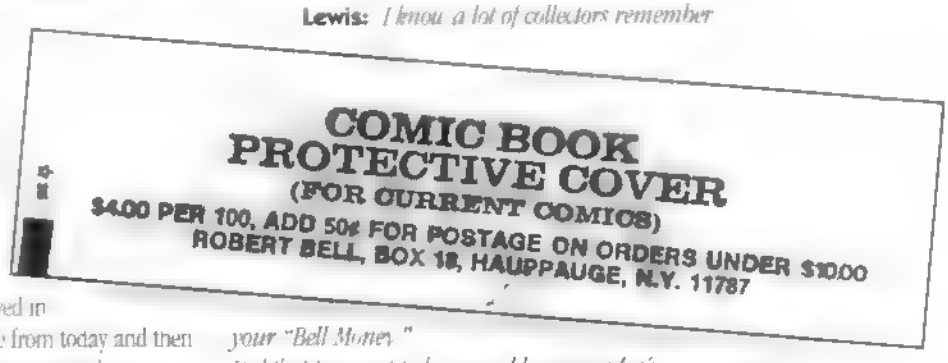
Lewis: *Any thoughts on the current state of the comic book industry?*

Robert: I feel that the comic companies just overdid it ... they raised their price from 10¢ to 12¢ to 15¢, to 20 to $3.95! So it's hard for collectors to really get involved at $3.95 a book. But at 10¢, if they had a dollar they can get 10 books! Now with $10 they can get two books. The same thing happened in the coin business.

I was in the coin business for awhile. The U.S. Mint used to charge $2 for a proof set and dealers started making money selling them for $5 and $10, so what does the Mint do? They say well we'll charge $10 too. They took the profit that the dealers were making and they wanted it all for themselves. I think there's a similar situation with some of the present-day comic book companies ... trying to cut the dealer out and make all the profit themselves.

There's a problem with the comic conventions as well. We used to have one a year; now we have one a week. It's just too much.

Lewis: *I know a lot of collectors remember your "Bell Money."*


COMIC BOOK
PROTECTIVE COVER
(FOR CURRENT COMICS)
$4.00 PER 100, ADD 50¢ FOR POSTAGE ON ORDERS UNDER $10.00
ROBERT BELL, BOX 18, HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. 11787

Did that turn out to be a good business idea?

Robert: Well it was not only a good idea, but I just wanted to put my family on these dollar bills. I thought that was kind of neat to have all of my children on the different bills. I remember the day I had them printed up. It was right around Christmas time, and I printed up thousands of them. On Christmas Eve I spread them all out. I had a staircase coming down from the bedrooms to the living room and I would lay down all these Bell dollars. The kids didn't even know I had them made up and I spread them all out over the stairs on Christmas Eve and they came down and they saw their pictures on these bills and they thought that was kind of neat. I just did it for a personal thing. I thought it was fun. I had a good effect on business for a few years, about three years I guess.

Lewis: *Do you still have much of it?*

Robert: I have enough to give my kids each a couple dozen sets apiece. That's enough.

Lewis: *Were you the originator of the Marvel Comic Checklist? The one with the illustration by George Olshevsky?*

Robert: Yes. I was the inventor of the Marvel Comic Checklist. It's basically a computer printout that's got all the Marvel mainstream titles, the numbers, and the story titles. It's on perforated computer paper or "IBM" paper. That was short-lived and just a passing thing. I didn't produce it for more than a year, but I remember that it was very popular, and it really went over well. I suppose I should have copyrighted it or something. The original version of the Marvel Comic Checklist came out with 32 pages, then went to 48, and eventually went to 64.

Lewis: *How did you get the idea for the Marvel Checklist?*

Robert: I had been a coin collector before comics, and they used to have coin checklists. Coin collectors wanted to check off all the dates that they had in their coin

THE FAMOUS INSCRIPTION on the Robert Bell comic bags was familiar to every collector for two decades. Invented and sold by Bell, hundreds of thousands of these bags were sold to comic collectors all over the world and have achieved a collectible status of their own.

IF IT'S WORTH COLLECTING, IT'S WORTH BAGGING! The original back cover ad on the first *Overstreet Price Guide* (1970). Note that even 26 years ago, different size bags had been developed by Bell to accommodate both Golden Age and Silver Age comics.

collections. So I thought comic collectors could use the same kind of tool. If you were collecting Fantastic Four, you might want to know what issues you need ... and what ones you have! I guess pretty well known for that one. That was done somewhere around 1963-65.

Lewis: *It's actually a small booklet.*

Robert: That's right. You could put it in your top pocket. That was really popular because collectors could easily carry it around with them. Before that most collectors would come into the store with loose-leaf papers that weren't attached. It was a pretty unwieldy approach to keeping track of your collection. But with that one "little pocket size book of mine you knew exactly what Marvels you did and didn't have. I still think it's a good idea.

Lewis: *Did anybody else ever copy the idea?*

Robert: Not to my knowledge. The only idea of mine that was copied, and it still upsets me today, was my invention of the comic bag. I was only 18 years old at the time, so I didn't know any better. But I did invent the comic book bag.

MARVEL
COMIC BAGS
LARGER BAGS FOR GOLDEN AGE COMICS ARE
ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE SAME PRICE
OVER 100,000 COMICS IN STOCK, SEND FOR FREE LIST
SAMPLE PLASTIC BAG ALSO SENT
SPECIALLY MADE FOR
MARVEL COMICS
PROTECT YOUR COMIC
COLLECTION WITH THESE BAGS
FOR ONLY $3.00 PER HUNDRED
$1.50 per 50 bags
(Add 50¢ for postage and handling on orders under $5)
"If it's worth collecting, it's worth bagging."
ROBERT BELL
BOX 18
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I remember Howard Rogofsky was visiting and asked me if I wanted to sell some comic bags. That's when I started selling the comic bags.

It all started when I would put more expensive issues in shirt bags or whatever kind of plastic bag I could find. I would fold it over three times, tape it up, and put the comic book in it. It protected the book pretty well.

So then I thought, "Hey you know maybe I can find a bag that would fit a comic book?" I went to a manufacturer and asked how much it would cost to manufacture bags. He gave me a price and the rest is history.

It started out with 3 mil bags selling for 2¢ a piece or $2 a hundred. Then it went to $3... and then to $4 a hundred. Now it's a big business.

Lewis: *Did the manufacturer suggest imprinting your name on the bags?*

Robert: No, that was my idea. I figured if the bags were going to be at every comic convention, I could get some advertising out of it. All I advertised on the bag was the sale of bags, not the sale of comic books. They would just say "comic book bags $3 a hundred" along with my mailing address. Bags were a big part of my business. Towards the end there I would order hundreds of thousands of bags at a time. They sold well and the 3 mil really worked great for most collectors. Unfortunately I don't think I even have a single comic bag left. Funny thing though... it took about ten years before anybody came out with another bag.

Lewis: *Why did you decide to leave the comic book business?*

Robert: I'd been in it for about 25 years... and I just got burned out.

I got tired of going to a warehouse every day, locking the door behind me, answering the phone, and not seeing people. What kept me sane was doing shows. I had fun doing that. But outside of that, I'm not the type of guy that can go into a warehouse all day long and just fill orders.

Lewis: *So you sold out to Gary Dolgoff. How did that come about?*

Robert: Well Gary and I had done business for years and years together and Gary is an honest guy and I've always done business with him and Peter Koch. When I decided to sell, Gary was one of the first guys I contacted. We cut a deal and that was it. It was simple, no nonsense.

Lewis: *Any regrets as you look back?*

Robert: It would be easy to sit back and say I sure regret leaving because I could have sold my books for ten times more money, when I sold, I did what I thought was right at the time. Most importantly though, I had a good time. I moved on with my life and I look back on that time as just a chapter. I did that chapter; now I'm doing another chapter. I don't really have any regrets.

Lewis: *Is there any aspect of the business you miss?*

Robert: What I miss the most is the people. I would say that the comic book people that I met throughout the years in my business were probably the nicest people that I've ever met. And I'll tell you this – they were the most honest people. I've dealt with checks coming in to my mail order business anywhere from 20, 30, 40 a day. Out of all of those I only had 4 or 5 bad checks a year. That is amazing. There's not another business that can claim that.

Lewis: *I know it's been a long time for you to recall the names of your many customers, but you can bet a lot of them are reading this interview right now.*

Robert: It's been ten years since I had any dealings with anybody in fandom. I do remember some names. I remember a guy named Mike Gorman. He was a guy who used to send me $10 a week like clockwork. Mike sent me $10-20 a week eight to ten years. Like clockwork.

Lewis: *How many names did you end up with on your final mailing list?*

Robert: Well my mailing list at the peak would be anywhere from 10-20 thousand people.

Lewis: *Was your mail order business very profitable?*

Robert: I raised four children, supported a wife, always lived in a nice house. I think that's a good way to measure it. I did all right. I never bragged about it. It was profitable.

Lewis: *One last question, Bob. Looking back over all those years is there one special event that was especially memorable?*

Robert: One time in the mid to late '70s I took my four children (three girls and one boy) to the Great Adventure amusement park in New Jersey. Spider-Man was there, walking around in a costume. My kids went up to Spider Man and one of them said, "My daddy sells comic books." Spider Man said, "Who's your dad?" My son said "Robert Bell." With that Spider-Man said, "Wow, I buy all my books from Robert Bell." and he shook my hand. My kids almost fell over knowing that Spider Man buys comic books from their daddy. I really enjoyed that, and most important was that Spider Man, who was one of my customers, had nothing but good things to say about me.

Lewis: *Bob it's been a real pleasure. Like talking with a friend from the old days.*

Robert: Well that's great Lewis and I'm glad we had this conversation.

I appreciate your thinking about me and thinking enough of me to interview me for *CBM*.

Lewis: *My pleasure, and I'm sure many of your former customers will enjoy hearing from you.* ■

Lewis Ferro has been a long time collector and historian of Marvel Comics and Marvel related memorabilia. Lewis also contributed articles to the original the CBM

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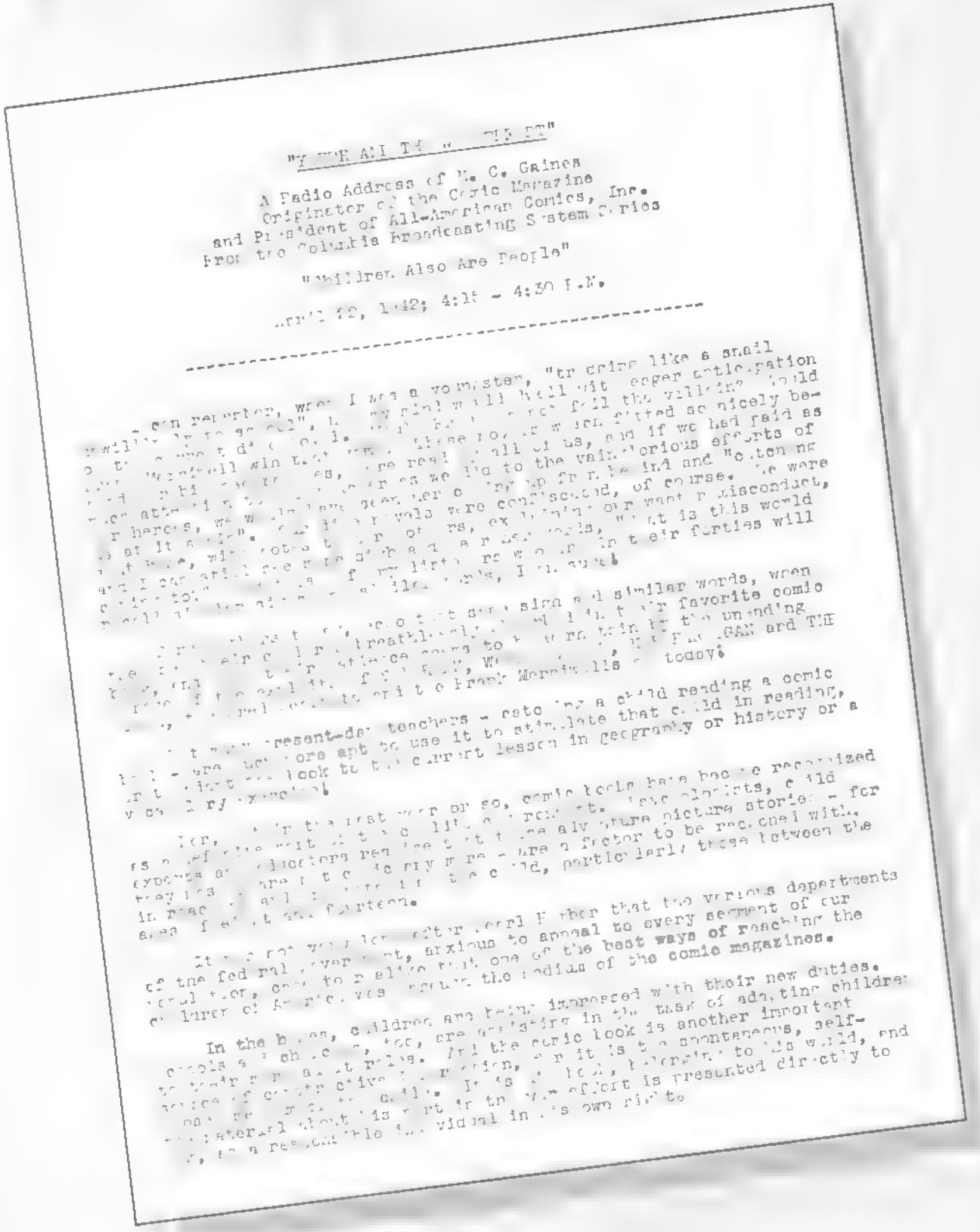
M. C. Gaines Radio Address



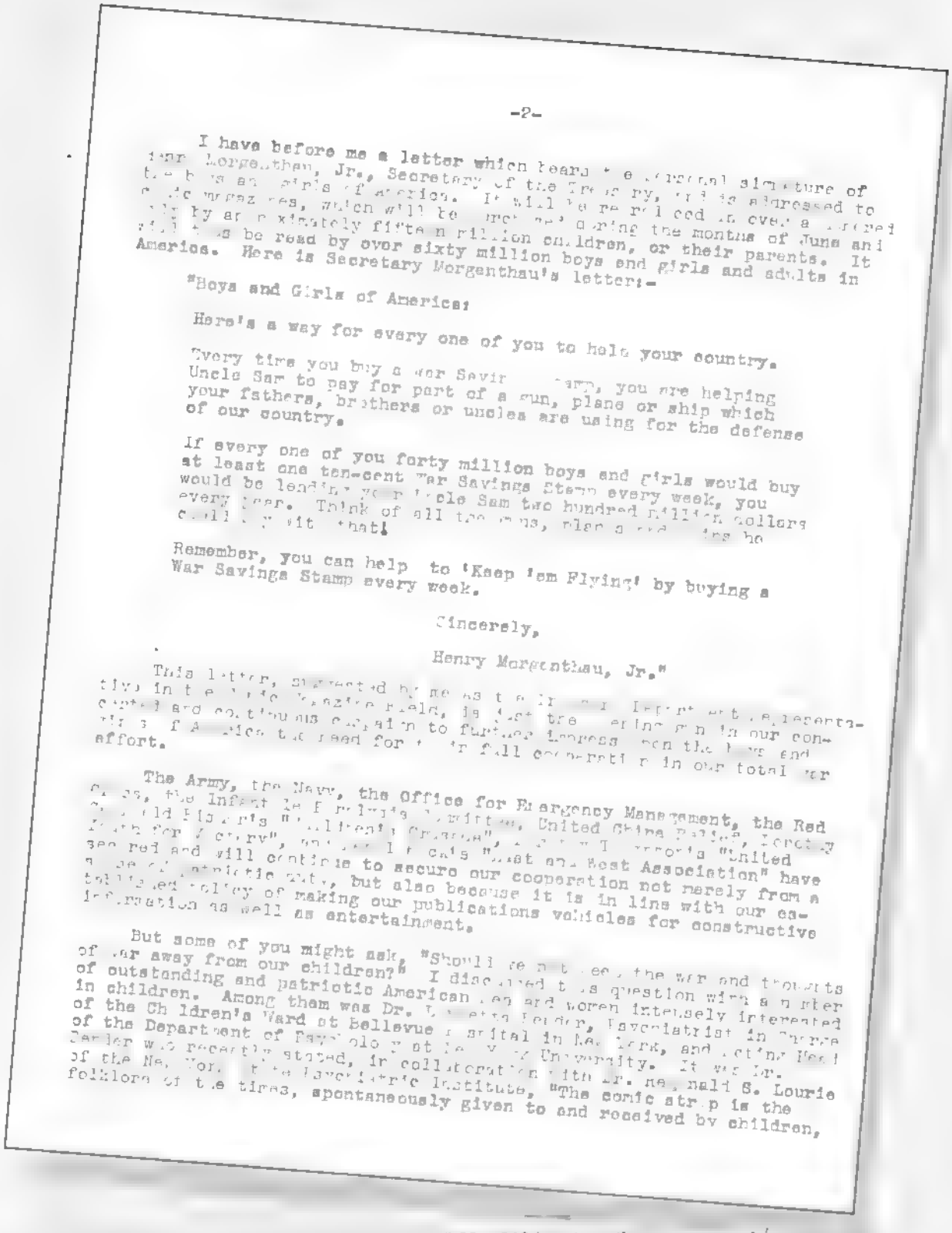
"[illegible]"

A Radio Address of M. C. Gaines
Originator of the Comic Magazine
and President of All-American Comics, Inc.
From the Columbia Broadcasting System Series

"Children Also Are People"

April 12, 1942; 4:15 - 4:30 P.M.

[illegible] reporter, when I was a youngster, "to drive like a small [illegible] to get [illegible]", but my final will [illegible] eager anticipation [illegible] to the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] fill the villains [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



-2-

I have before me a letter which bears the personal signature of Hon. Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, and is addressed to the boys and girls of America. It will be received over a period by approximately fifteen million children during the months of June and will also be read by over sixty million boys and girls and adults in America. Here is Secretary Morgenthau's letter:-

"Boys and Girls of America:

Here's a way for every one of you to help your country.

Every time you buy a War Savings Stamp, you are helping Uncle Sam to pay for part of a gun, plane or ship which your fathers, brothers or uncles are using for the defense of our country.

If every one of you forty million boys and girls would buy at least one ten-cent War Savings Stamp every week, you would be lending your Uncle Sam two hundred million dollars every year. Think of all the guns, planes and fighting ships he could buy with that!

Remember, you can help to 'Keep 'em Flying!' by buying a War Savings Stamp every week.

Sincerely,

Henry Morgenthau, Jr."

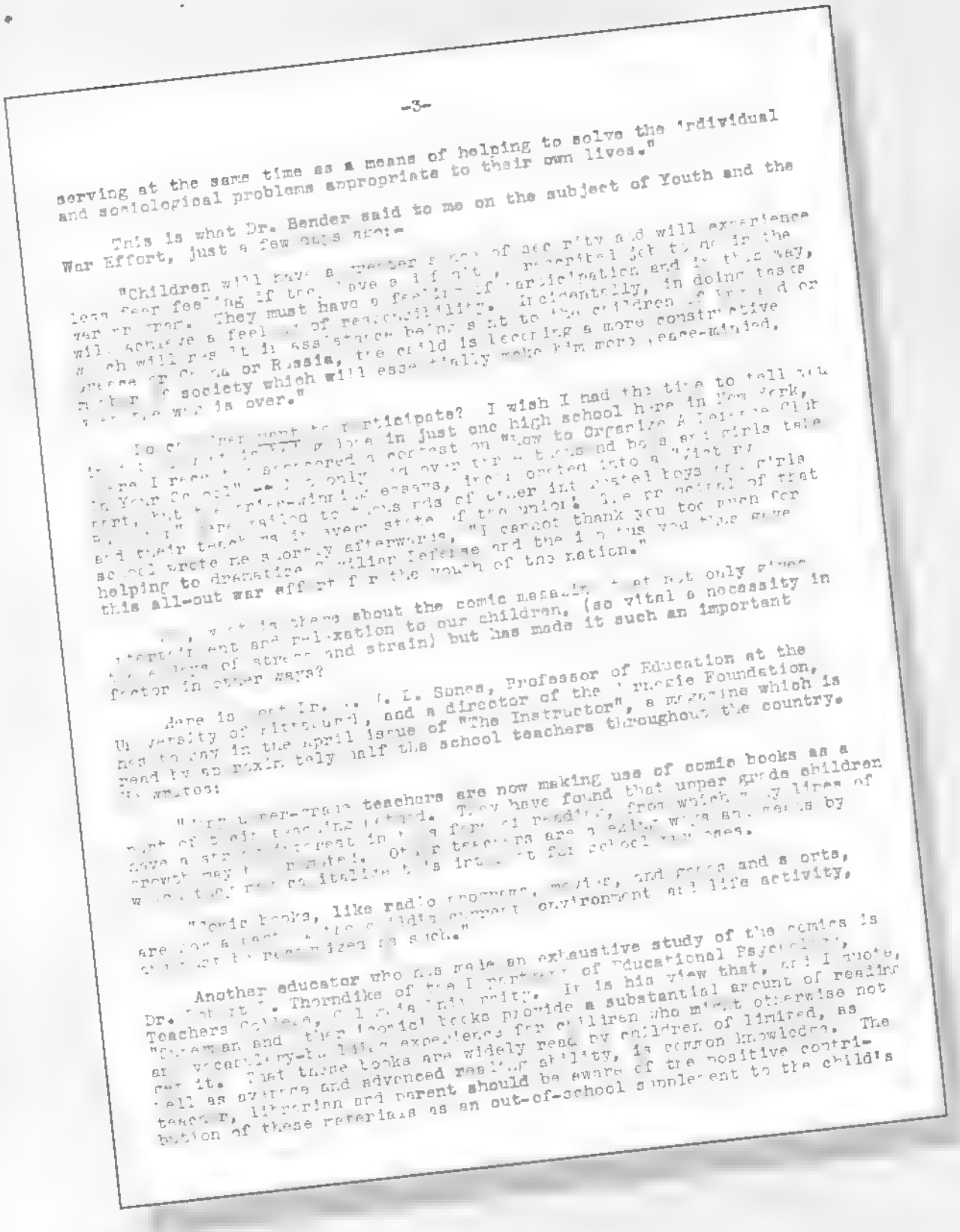
This letter, suggested by me as a [illegible] effective in the comic magazine field, is just the beginning of a concerted and continuous campaign to further impress upon the boys and girls of America the need for their full cooperation in our total war effort.

The Army, the Navy, the Office for Emergency Management, the Red Cross, the Infantile Paralysis Foundation, United China Relief, Inc., Daily Worker Fight for Peace", and the U.S.O. reports "United See red and will continue to secure our cooperation not merely from a [illegible] patriotic duty, but also because it is in line with our established policy of making our publications vehicles for constructive information as well as entertainment.

But some of you might ask, "Should we not keep the war and thoughts of war away from our children?" I discussed this question with a number of outstanding and patriotic American men and women intensely interested in children. Among them was Dr. Lauretta Bender, Psychiatrist in Charge of the Children's Ward at Bellevue Hospital in New York, and Acting Head of the Department of Psychology at New York University. It was Dr. Bender who recently stated, in collaboration with Dr. Reginald S. Lourie of the New York State Psychiatric Institute, "The comic strip is the folklore of the times, spontaneously given to and received by children,

EDITOR'S NOTE. The M.C. Gaines radio address of April 22, 1942 is yet another incredible piece of the Joel Frieman package. It (along with the article "No Laughing Matter" on page 22) shows that even in the early 1940s, criticism of comic books was becoming a major social issue. For long-time collectors who have always thought of the early 1950s as the only time comics were under attack, this come as an interesting (if not amazing) revelation. As more and more data and information see the light of day, I believe historians will most likely re-write the chapter on industry criticism to include a longer time-line than has been previously described in most books on comic history.

M.C. Gaines Radio Address



-3-

serving at the same time as a means of helping to solve the individual and sociological problems appropriate to their own lives."

This is what Dr. Bender said to me on the subject of Youth and the War Effort, just a few quick facts:-

"Children will have a greater sense of security and will experience less fear feeling if they have a feeling of participation and in this way, war or war. They must have a feeling of responsibility. Incidentally, in doing tests will achieve a feeling of responsibility. Incidentally, in doing tests which will result in assistance being sent to the children of Britain or China or Russia, the child is learning a more constructive attitude or society which will ease finally make him more peace-minded, after the war is over."

So children want to participate? I wish I had the time to tell you about the [illegible] I sponsored in just one high school here in New York, before I resigned -- I only had over three thousand boys and girls take part, but the prize-winning essays, from contestants ranging from [illegible] and their treatment in every state of the union. The principal of that school wrote me a story afterwards, "I cannot thank you too much for helping to dramatize civilian defense and the part this youth has given this all-out war effort for the youth of the nation."

Now, what is there about the comic magazine that not only gives [illegible] and relaxation to our children, (so vital a necessity in [illegible] of stress and strain) but has made it such an important factor in other ways?

Here is what Dr. [illegible] L. Sones, Professor of Education at the University of Pittsburgh, and a director of the Progressive Foundation, has to say in the April issue of "The Instructor", a magazine which is read by approximately half the school teachers throughout the country. He writes:

"Many [illegible] teachers are now making use of comic books as a part of their teaching method. They have found that upper grade children have a strong interest in this form of reading, from which many lines of growth may be promoted. Other teachers are making use of parts by which they may capitalize this interest for school purposes.

"Comic books, like radio programs, movies, and press and arts, are [illegible] the child's current environment and life activity, and may be recognized as such."

Another educator who has made an exhaustive study of the comics is Dr. [illegible] Thorndike of the Department of Educational Psychology, Teachers College, Columbia University. It is his view that, and I quote, "Superman and other [illegible] books provide a substantial amount of reading material and vocabulary-building experience for children who might otherwise not get it. That these books are widely read by children of limited, as well as average and advanced reading ability, is common knowledge. The teacher, librarian and parent should be aware of the positive contribution of these materials as an out-of-school supplement to the child's

reading experience."

Several years ago, I inaugurated a Book Review Page in all of the Superman-DC comic publications. It has been successful in getting many children to visit their public and school libraries more frequently. These Book Review Pages are now being conducted by Miss Josette Frank of the Child Study Association, who, in a broadcast on this series last August, stated, "We at the Child Study Association have a deep and abiding faith in children. I believe that we may safely accept our children's likes and dislikes for what they are - a stage in their growth - provided we also help them grow toward wider horizons. I believe that, along with their other reading, we can safely let our children read the comics."

Dr. Sones, Dr. Thorndike and Miss Josette Frank, together with Dr. C. Bowie Millican of New York University, Dr. Ruth Eastwood Perl of the American Psychological Society and Gene Tunney, now on active duty as a Commander in the United States Naval Reserve, constitute the Editorial Advisory Board of the Superman-DC publications of which All-American Comics Inc. is a component part.

I also want to read you several paragraphs from a letter received recently from Jonathan Daniels, assistant chief in the Office of Civilian Defense in Washington:

"Dear Mr. Gaines:

Dr. Martha Eliot, Associate Chief of the U. S. Children's Bureau and Dr. Viola Bernard, Consultant to the Children's Section of the Office of Civilian Defense, have discussed with me the use of comic magazines in furnishing information on civilian defense to the children of America.

Drs. Eliot and Bernard have advised me of the contacts they have had with your office, and the work that you and other publishers in your field are doing in cooperation with the Army and Navy and the Treasury Departments.

We at the OCD agree with Drs. Eliot and Bernard that the comic magazine is an excellent medium of reaching the children, and we are now preparing material which, when ready, we hope you will also put into the hands of all the other publishers of comic magazines."

And so you see that the cooperation of the youth of America is also being sought in the total War Effort through the medium which receives its undivided attention - the comic book. And the Youth of America being what it is - intelligent, free, quick and responsive, it will play its part, have no fear!

Let us remember, always, that "Children Also Are People" and that, having even a more vital stake than we grown-ups in this war for survival, they, too, will fight for ultimate victory, as victory it must and will be!

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

(Additional copies of this address may be obtained by writing to: Education Department, All-American Comics Inc., 225 Lafayette St., New York City.)

High demand for pre-hero DC and Marvel!

I look so forward to this time each year, and the arrival of the "Big Book". The phones are always rather busy over the next few days after its arrival, while information is being compared and growth is calculated. The flurry of activity is the rush through the latest ads to see just what "instantaneously" became a good buy. Second only to this renewed vigor in the market is the "pre-guide ouying" by those looking to own an instantaneous hit, and this rush of act vity produced some outstanding sales for the past month.

Platinum

We've all seen the ads from Diamond Galleries and the breakout section included in the update and latest Guide. This interest is nothing new, but more and more collectors and dealers are entering this rarefied market with interest. To date, supply vs demand is extremely one-sided and probably will remain so. Nevertheless, a few sales of note has been already broadcast.

Sales: The Funnies #22 FN $140, Deadwood Gulch GD+ $45; Mutt And Jeff 1928, w/o Dust Jacket $625, Strange As It Seems #1 VF- $225 ; Toonerville Trolley #1 FN $100.

Golden Age

GA is still moving very briskly along, and many collectors honestly feel that if one wants to put together a "collection" for the long term, the time to do it is now, even as costly as it might seem. Enough capital and faith in the continuing longevity of the market has belied any hesitations that a short term slowdown would produce any bargains. Would any of the great books find their way to the mainstream marketplace if there was a slowdown? Most are doubtful, and believe they would be absorbed quickly enough. The continued interest in the early Golden Age books (and the late Golden Age material from the smaller publishers) continues to fuel the overall Golden Age market. Keep an especially sharp eye out for material from the more obscure publishers, as interest continues to escalate with little sign of abatement in the near future.

Sales: Best Comics #2 abVF $220; Action Comics #56 VF+ $675; Action #72 VF+ $585; Our Flag #1 FN/VF $2,000; Green Lantern #3 abFN $1,400; All Select #4 VG/FN $395, Sub Mariner #1 VG+ $4,200; Target #1 abFN+ $950; Jungle #2 g $180; Captain America #68 VF $1,200, More Fun #51 VG $2,100, Plastic Man #1 FN+ $2,400, Whiz #15 VF- $800, Planet #35 FN++ $310; Key Comics #1 VF+ $400, Hang Man #3 FN+ $695, 4 Co or #43 VF/NM $435, Samson #4 FN/VF $315, Punch #13 NM $545, Green Mask #1 g+ $210; USA #4 abVF $1,380.

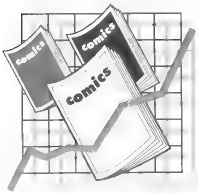
Post Golden Age (1946-49), Pre Silver Age (1950-56)

In addition to the continued and growing interest of the "Good Girl" books, pre-code horror and crime, and scarce one shots interest in pre-hero DC and Atlas books in heating up. Mystery in Space, Strange Tales, Strange Adventures, Tales To Astonish and Tales Of Suspense are find ng quite a receptive co lector base after the past few years of exposure in Pat Calhoun's regular CBM column. Locating these books is increasingly difficult as the line between this era and early S ilver Age begins to blur for some collectors. There is obvi ously a huge and almost insatiable demand for this material.

Sales: US Fighting Air Force #1 VF/NM $98; Phantom Lady #13 FN $1,400, Intimate Love #9 NM $70; Voodoo #19 VF $185; Forbidden Worlds #1 VF- $670; Freckles And His Friends #5 FN $39; Trapped #1 VF/NM $110; Ideal #3 FN $90; Bruce Gentry #1 VF/NM $510, Pictorial Romances #4 VG $65, Rin Tin Tin #1 FN $75; Flash #101 GD $380, Planet #66 VF $395; Secret Loves #2 FN $125; Target

(*continued on page 71*)

MARKET REPORTS



JOHN CHRUSCINSKI & B. ELLSWORTH
TROPIC COMICS
Plantation, Florida

Hello again from South Florida! We have been enjoying gorgeous weather along with fantastic sales of Silver Age and Golden Age material. Recently, we purchased a large collection which included a Worlds Best #1 along with Worlds Finest #2 100, large runs of Brave and Bold, Justice League, and Showcase.

Golden Age has been selling at a very fast pace. Four Color sales of Disney related items, Centaurs, Fiction House, and Fox are most in demand.

Recent Sales: Four Color #9 GD+ $900, #386 GD $150 ; along with ten other books with Donald Duck sold for $2,800 Mystery Men #1 restored VF and Planet #1 restored both for $8,000; New Comics #1 restored FN $5,000; and Worlds Best #1 FN/VF unrestored $4,000.

Silver Age has been very steady lately with Marvels leading the pack. DC Showcases and key Superman books along with DC War comics are running a close second.

Recent Sales: Brave and Bold #30 VG $250; Amazing Fantasy #15 GD- $1,000, Showcase #13 VG+ $1,400; Tales of Suspense #39 VG $750; X-Men #1 VF $4,000.

Other items of note, all Warren and Sci-Fi Magazines from the 50s and the 60s, along with Sci-Fi and Horror Pre-Code comics are in big demand here right now. Also in demand are the 50s and 60s Sci-Fi and Horror posters.

Recent Sales: Star Wars Advance mylar poster circa 1976 sold for $1400 trade and cash. So until next time, seeya.

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GREG PHARIS & DAVE GRISEZ

SAN DIEGO COMICS & COLLECTIBLES

San Diego, California

Weather is not the only thing that's been warming up in San Diego! 10¢ and 12¢ cover price Silver DC's are picking up some major steam---part of this could be due to an ongoing acquisition of a very large Silver Age DC collection from a (believe it or not) local collector who recently became aware that he still had his childhood collection in storage---untouched since he packed them away over 20 years ago! Up until now it's been pretty sparse pickins' because no one was selling those Silver Age gems, but, apparently the drought is over in our neck of the woods!

Silver Age Sales: World's Finest #116 FN $35, #117 FN $35, #53 VG $15, Jimmy Olsen #53 VG $15 (Classic Turtle Boy cover); Flash #129 FN- $75, #123 VG+ $275, Green Lantern #40 FN $175; Brave & Bold #34 VG $200, X-Men #'s 23-29 NM all at high guide; Spider-Man #51 FN+ $140

Chasing down the Golden Age, post-Golden Age, and pre-Silver Age market is still very intense but rewarding. (as if you didn't know)

Golden Age sales: Guns Against Gangsters #1 VF+ $85 (w/LB Cole cover and first story by Schomburg) Young Romance #37 VG $18 (S & K interiors) Rulah #24 VF $450; Terrors of the Jungle #10 VF+ $125, Zoot #8 FN/VF $350, Planet #60 FR/GD $25; Cartoon Spice #3 VF+ $100 (Very white pages This is a rare Charlton publication from 1957 which is not listed and is the first copy we've ever seen Anyone know about these? Might make a good article for CBM!)

I'll also mention a recent merchandise sale of dozens of Marvel Slurpee Super Hero Cups (Say that real fast 10 times) at $4.50 each.. in grade that's a pretty fast turnover item.

Don't forget to come by and say howdy this summer when you come to the San Diego Comic Con International. Good luck and happy hunting!

DAN GREENHALGH • SHOWCASE NEW ENGLAND • WALLINGFORD • CONNECTICUT

The snow had melted and the sun is shining bright here in New England. Those of you brave enough to have ventured out of the house have already discovered what I have. The market for Gold and Silver appears for the moment to have returned to its 1995 levels.

We've been selling books at a blistering pace as is evidenced by the following sales data. March was a record month for us. April is not yet over, but at this writing, April has already eclipsed March sales… and is our biggest month ever! Everything is selling well at the moment. It just doesn't seem to matter what it is… high grade; mid-grade; low grade; pedigree; non-pedigree, mainstream; esoteric, miscellaneous… it's all selling. Even westerns are selling (sorry about that).

My advice this year to the investors is " buy NM Silver Marvels in the $50 to $200 price range. I see demand for these books as strong and steady… I predict enough to keep prices escalating for at least the next 12 to 15 months

On a final note I want to thank everyone out there for their support and feedback, especially to those CBM fans who have made a point of calling me personally to discuss my reports as well as the market. Your feedback helps me keep in touch with how YOU are doing. Thanks again

Golden Age

Action #2, VG $8,000, VG+ (MR) $6,250, #3 VG $5,500, #4 VG+ $4,500, FN+ (MR) $3,500, #6 VG $3000, #7 VG+ $7,000, #8 FN+ (MR) $3,000, #9 F+ (MR) $3,000, #10 F+ (ER) $2,000, GD/VG $3,000. All Star #8 VF+ $7,500, #18 VF/NM $2,000; All Winners #1 VF $9,000, Batman #1 FN/VF (LR) $23,000, #43 NM $1,200; Captain America #3 VG $2,000, #4 F+ (MR) $1,500, #5 F- $1,100, #7 VG+ $1,050, #9 FN/VF $1,900, #14 VF $1,900, #38 VF $1,000, #53 $1,000; Detective #27 VF (ER) $36,500, #35 GD/VG $2,000, #36 FN/VF (LR) $3,000, #37 FN/VF (LR) $3,000, #39 FN+ (MR) $1,500, Detective Picture Stories #1 FN/VF (LR) $3,500; Human Torch #2 (#1) FN/VF (LR) $9,000; Looney Tunes #1 FN+ (MR) $1,900; Marvel Mystery #4 FN+ (ER) $1,700, #10 VG $1,000, Planet Comics #1 VG+ (LR) $1,600, Police Comics #1 F+ $2,500; Submariner #1 NM- $25,000; Suspense Comics #10 VF+ $1,200; Star Spangled (all Edgar Church copies) #16 $3,760, #17 $3,760, #25 $2,950, #28 $3,000, #32 $1,450, #33 $1,450, #35 $1,450, #37 $1,450, #40 $1,450, #49 $1,320, #65 $7,150, Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #1 VG/FN (LR) $3,500; World's Finest #3 VF $1,000

Silver Age

Amazing Fantasy #15 FN+ $5,500, VG/F (two copies) $2,800, VF (MR) (two copies) $2,500, Amazing Spider-Man #1 VF+ (LR) $7,500, F+ $5,000, VF (MR) $2300, VG- $1500, G/VG $1,000, #2 VF/NM $4,200, #5 NM- $2,200, #7 NM- $1150, #8 NM- $1,000, #9 VF/NM $1,000, #14 VF+ $1,000, Avengers #4 VF/NM $1250; Fantastic Four #3 VF $1,400, #48 NM/MT $1,500; Flash #105 FN+ (LR) $1,200; Hulk #2 VF/NM $4,500, #2 F+ $1,200, #3 VF $1,400, VF $1,300, Journey Into Mystery #83 VF- $2,400, FN $1200; Showcase #4 FN- $4,600, VG $2,800; Strange Tales #110 NM/MT $2,500; Tales of Suspense #39 VF $2,700, FN/VF $1700, FN+ $1,400, X-Men #1 FN+ $1,700

GREG WHITE • COMICS & COLLECTIBLES

Kissimmee, Florida

Welcome to Central Florida. I hope everyone had a good month. Overall sales have increased in recent weeks via mail order and store sales. Convention sales remain flat. A greater number of collectors are visiting Florida lately and fewer collections are being offered for sale - always a sign that the economy is on the upswing! Hopefully this will carry through the year and we will enjoy sales similar to the early part of the decade.

Silver Age (1955-1969):

Demand continues for high grade DC and Marvel. Other books that move well are photo cover Dell and Gold Key, Atlas and 1950's romance. Keeping a steady stock of these titles is a challenge. Drawing off collections I bought years ago helps, however I would like to see a nice group come in the front door! Two

Marvel books repeatedly asked for have been Fantastic Four 5 and X-MEN 12. Various issues of Showcase have topped the list for DC. Sadly we have little demand for the Disney comics from this period, even the Barks issues are slow. Most other funny animal and humor sell sporadically at best. Their day may come.

Recent Sales: Amazing Spider-man 1 GD $700, Silver Surfer 1 NM $350, Tales To Astonish 35 VG $150, Showcase 35 VG $135, Batman 171 fine $175, Star Trek 1 FN $150, Bewitched 1 VF $25, Blue Beetle 1 NM $50

Golden Age Books (1935-1955):

We recently purchased a small group of DC golden age. Included were copies of World's Finest, Batman, Superman, and More Fun. We are pleased to have these books… we only wish the collection was larger. Golden Age keys continue to be in demand. Mainstream, mid grade Golden Age remains sluggish. Even at 20% below overstreet some of these books are tough to move. It seems that the majority of the collectors are seeking the same books. Timely and DC lead the pack for overall demand. Certain Fawcett, Fox, and MLJ are also good movers.

Recent Sales: Batman #3 GD $800, Superman #6 VG $500, Airboy #12 FN $80, More Fun #97 VG $150, Strange Adventures #14 VF $225, Flash #6 FR $125.

(*Continued on page 72*)

V10 #2 VF $210; Wyatt Earp #4 NM $95; All Flash #32 FN $345.

Silver Age

After Golden Age went through its heyday in the 70s, and coupled with Gerber's exhaustive research, collectors were able to step back and better ascertain the relative rarity of particular titles and issues. Silver has just emerged from that same evaluation, and those that did their homework are actively shopping for certain books that seem a bit more scarce than others. The consensus is that Pre 1963 DC is generally more scarce than Marvel. , but there are certainly a number of early Marvels that continue to be elusive in high grade (this is not news to most). Likewise, key books continue to be in demand, with high grade still bringing multiples of Guide. In contrast to the early 60's books, many suggest that beautiful high grade copies of the late 60s Marvel and DC Silver is in ample supply. This is still a matter of debate among those in the know, but I think that they remain quite a bargain regardless! Consider many are priced at $35-70, and that's a bargain in any hobby.

Sales: Showcase #8 GD $1,350, #22 GD $400; Star Trek #1 FN $185, Space Adventures #33 FN+ $120; Atom #1 GD $110, Atom #7 VF+ $225; X-Men #2 FN $395; Sea Devils #1 VG $135; Amazing Spider-Man #2 GD $600; Hulk #102 NM $145; 80 Page Giant #4 FN $42; Daredevil #1 FN+ $495; Tower Of Shadows #1 FN $12; Batman #155 VG $85; Amazing Adventures #3 GD $55; Avengers #4 FN $400; Worlds' Finest #72 GD $60

Post Silver Age (Bronze Age, 1970-79)

So what are the difficult to find early 70s books? Few know, and most aren't telling… yet. Information is tough to gather on these books amid the frenzy to among many collectors to "snap them up" quickly. Romance, Horror, Gothic, and the many "oddball" titles lead the way on collector want-lists… with many specific falling into the truly scarce column. 100 page issues and the Kirby 4th World books are beginning to find a large following as prices begin an upward climb. Collectors and dealers are quickly trying to educate themselves about this complex market, and it is no easy task. But the main reason so many new players are entering this segment of the market is that prices are, pretty much across the board, incredibly affordable. This single factor allows Bronze age material to hold great promise as well as inexpensive recreation. If ever the word ground floor was applicable .. it is here! One area that is already on the move is DC 48 and 52 pagers from the early '70s with 25¢ cover prices. These, especially in high grade, are selling like hotcakes!

X-Men Giant Size #1 NM $360, Young Love #197 NM $36; The Demon #1 NM $28; Forever People #9 NM $18, Adventure #495 NM $10, Supergirl #1 NM $14; Adventure #435 NM $18, Amazing Spiderman #126 $45; Journey into Mystery #1 NM $12; Blitzkrieg #1 NM $8; Unknown Soldier #205 NM $22, Night Nurse #3 NM $38; Legion of Superheroes #1 VF/NM $25, Wonder Woman #200 NM $16, Tarzan #207 NM $15, Detective #438 NM $38, Marve Team Up #1 NM $110, Plop #1 NM $12, Marvel Chillers #1 NM $8; Marvel Comics Super Special #1 VF/NM $50

Answering the ever-present question "what is going to be the next high demand area this spring and summer" is the preoccupation of most dealers and collectors right now. Sure, we are always searching for that great key book in high grade for a bargain price, but when those are just not to be found, what do we turn to next? Trying to stay one step ahead of the next "breakout" issue or title is often frustrating… but when we actually do find that issue, it makes the whole effort worth it. Good luck finding that undiscovered and plentiful vein of ore in your area! ■

TIM COLLINS • RTS UNLIMITED, INC. • GOLDEN • COLORADO

Summer is fast approaching as is the end of school for the nation's youth. Let's hope that this summer they will find their local shops filled with comics that they will read and enjoy! The past month has been a rather slow month as I spent much time reorganizing my warehouse and dealing with issues that won't lead immediately to new sales (Ack! I hate accounting and taxes!) So, no big sales this month. However, the new Price Guide is out. The Golden Age boom of the past year is definitely evident in the vast increases most Golden Age books have enjoyed. It looks like the average Golden Age book from the top 100 list went up 30%! Wow! I predict these trends to continue this year but maybe at an average increase of only 20%

From the top Silver Age list, I think that there is something odd going on! Amazing Fantasy #15 is listed at $26,000 NM; Showcase #4 is $24,500; Amazing Spider-Man #1 $18,000, followed by Fantastic Four #1 at $17,000, next a huge fall off to Showcase #8 at $10,500, then Incredible Hulk #1 at $10,000 followed by a bunch of books below $4,800.

OK, so we have four books above $17,000 and then two books around $10,000 and then oodles below $5,000. Either the top four or top six books are overpriced, or some of the books below $5,000 will break out from the pack to find space in the $10,000 to $17,000 range or the $5,000 to $10,000 range. Personally, I'll bet on the top six being overpriced!

Just how hard is it to find one of these top six books? In my experience, and with the exception of Showcase #4 and 8 in true VF or better) not very. Just go to a major convention this summer and I'll bet you that there will be multiple dealers with multiple copies of those top six books. I'll also bet you that not a single one will have multiple copies of any of the top 100 Golden Age books. Does this mean I expect a Silver Age crash? No, but I do expect those top six books to "stagnate" for a time. I also expect to see them available in mid to low grades significantly below guide. In NM the Top Silver Age books are really tough to find. But in the lower grades they are very, very easy to find. I have heard rumors of a certain East Coast dealer that has a long white box of AF #15's! Should the dealer decide to start to sell them, a "crash" would occur. Also, this month I met with one of my high end clients. This collector has almost finished his collection of Top 100 Golden Age books and has high grade copies of the key Silver Age comics. He will buy Golden Age comics all day long over guide but scoffed when I showed him a VF copy of Amazing Spider-Man #1 priced at $15,000. When this type of high end collector scoffs at the Silver Age prices, I really wonder about that part of the market.

Tim's tip of the month: Don't collect what everyone else is. If you are in this hobby for the long haul you will see every genre become hot then cold. If you buy when things are hot, you could overpay and you'll be chasing everyone's tail. Try collecting what isn't hot. In many cases you can get really great Golden Age comics that aren't in high demand and sometimes even priced below Guide. Then at some point in the future, what you started to collect just might become all the rage and you will have saved a fortune! Some suggestions as to currently slow genres: western, romance, funny animal, and historical/literary (including Classics Illustrated).

Till next time.

GREG WHITE CONTINUED

Toys and Artwork:

We purchased a nice group of Hanna-Barbera animation drawings and cels that will help fill out our art corner. Another recent find was a quality group of Disney seri-graph cels, limited edition lithographs, and signed & numbererd prints. These items will bolster our present selection of strip art, comic book art, and misc. animation drawings. Not much in the way of toys this past month. We are always looking for Aurora model kits, Captain Action dolls, Davy Crockett, and Zorro related items. Demand continues for Corgi die cast vehicles, bubble gum cards, early GI Joe, and Barbie dolls. I wish I could purchase more of these items!

Recent Sales: Mickey Mouse animation drawing $95, Archie original art comic book cover (1960's) $600, Wolfman Aurora kit (built up) $60, Phantom board game (1960's) $40, Munsters Card Game (1964) $35.

That is all for this month! Have a great Spring! If you visit the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello!

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Comic book values and prices listed here are subject to the above conditions. Seasoned hobbiests are acutely aware that comic book and collectible prices and values vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

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to produce twelve issues of Catman Comics, which were reprinted in the late Sixties. Perhaps one of your Australian readers can provide more information on Catman's adventures "down under."

Looking forward to your next issue and wishing you both all the best for the future.

Paul Gravett, England

Your excellent Catman info is amazing! I had no idea that Catman continued in Australia. As an avid collector of foreign comics (especially English language books), I now have something new and rather exciting to add to my want list. Thanks for writing, Paul, and give my best to the other collectors in your area.

Absurd Pricing Structure!

I'm writing this to finally, after years of silence, add my opinion on this "Condition vs. Rarity/Scarcity" matter. For the first decade or so of this hobby, we studied and wrote and discussed the "Golden Age of Comics" while simultaneously buying, selling, and trading them. The "Order of the Day" and preoccupation of many of us was "the hunt" for the rare and scarce books.

We were not concerned, aside from having a "decent copy," about high grade/pedigree type comics (if a comic was found in exceptional condition, then that was an extra bonus.) The entire market was founded and sustained upon this supply and demand principle. That is, comic books were to be collected for fun and pleasure as well as for study… and yes, profit.

But note how this principal has been turned on its head. Now certain parties are manipulating the market using analogy with other collectible markets… markets which emphasize condition above all else, but which have nothing or very little to do with the world of comic book collecting. And on top of this, some of these very same people have the gall to complain why so many people in this hobby are in it only for investment and speculation!! If its pounded constantly into our heads that condition is all that matters (or mostly)… is it any surprise that many Golden Age books in below Fine condition are vastly under priced relative to many tons of later comics in high grade! A pricing structure based on condition is absurd! That's why, for example, Spider-Man #1 is "worth" by Guide in high grade more than an Action #1 in Good! Ridiculous! While some will make a fortune in the short term, comic book collect ing will suffer for it in the longer term and, I predict, will disappear in another decade or so.

For what matters is the whole content… the object itself… the comic book… not just condition. And if the fun, pleasure, study, and understanding of a comic is so diminished, and condition so elevated—why bother with collecting at all?

Stephen B. Keisman, Florida

If by pricing structure, you mean price spread, I don't know of any other variable to base it on except condition. But I, for one, have never felt "that condition is all that matters" and I know of only a handful in the entire bobby who support such a view. Although I agree with your statement "what matters is the whole content… the object itself… the comic book… not just condition", I will be the first to admit that when a half-century old book somehow survives in near-perfect condition I am awed by it, and I want it!

Unabashed Bat-fan

As usual, I was pleased to receive the latest issue (#34) of CBM in the mail. I always look forward to reading the in-depth articles and interviews that set your magazine apart from the fanboy magazines that proliferate the stands! However, this time I was disappointed! Being an unabashed Bat-fan, I was dismayed by the superficial treatment given to the work of Dick Sprang in Joe Desris' otherwise interesting article. To many Bat-fans, Dick Sprang's version of the Dark Knight is our favorite! I expected some illustrations at least, and a predominance, at best, in your Color Gallery. His innovative use of panel structure and a variety of action scenes from unusual and tilted perspectives separated him from a lot of his peers then and certainly pases what many consider art now. On the other hand, Dean Scoville's look at the Sci-Fi Batman, was an interesting tongue-in-cheek look at an otherwise silly and bizarre (though still enjoyable) era in Batman's (and America's) history. I realize there are a lot of Duck Fans out there, but I feel more emphasis should have been given to Dick Sprang than was shown in this issue. Sincerely,

Eric G. Blackmore, Tennessee

Point well taken… more should have been devoted to Dick Sprang info! It was regrettably, just a case of limited space. Thanks for keeping us on track. Thanks to all who wrote in this time. Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. Send your correspondence to: Marketplace Mail, P.O. Box 180900, Coronado, CA 92178.

MYSTERY, HORROR & SUSPENSE

Blackstone Master Magician	**Journey into Mys.**	**Rip Hunter T. Master**	**161 VF/NM ... $12**
2 VF $250	90 VG $24	19 VG/FN $20	180 VF- $85
Chals. of the Unk.	100 VG/VF $75	22 VF/NM $40	**Strange Sus. Stories**
2 FN+ $225	113 FN+ $25	29 VF+ $35	1 VF- $360
Dark Shadows	118 NM $85	**Shocking Mys. Cases**	1 VG/FN $150
1 VF/NM ..... HTM	118 NM $85	50 VG+ $85	2 FN+ $140
House of Mystery	118 VF/NM $55	54 VF- $60	**Tales of the Unexpd.**
84 VF- $30	121 NM $85	80 VG/FN $35	8 FN/VF $110
150 VG+ $20	**Mystery in Space**	**Strange Advs.**	67 VF $25
House of Secrets	81 FN/VF $15	30 VG+ $35	99 VF $28
82 NM $450	84 VF $10	160 FN+ $25	**Vault of Horror**
Intrigue	**Mystic**	162 FN+ $15	18 FN $107
Circle & Copy	**White Mtn. Copy**	168 VF $21	23 VG $57
1 VF $200	47 VF/NM $200	173 VF $21	31 VG $41
		178 FN/VF $17	33 VG $45

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WARREN REECE

Motion Picture Funnies Weekly #1 vs. Marvel Comics #1... and other interesting controversies!

Normally I tend to be rather wordy but on this occasion, I will try to address some issues with what I hope will be poetic brevity largely due to my detailed coverage of the key topic Motion Picture Funnies Weekly, in an article that was published in this respected magazine (CBM #21, Jan/Feb 1993 Page #42).

Mr Nelson's recent letter was both detailed and interesting. However, like most arguments presented to further the allegation that MPFW #1 is the first appearance of Bill Everett's Sub-Mariner, it seems to be founded on the preconceived conclusion that it did predate Marvel Comics #1. The case is made (in my opinion) with inductive, as opposed to deductive, reasoning. It is furthered through what may be "hearsay" in the form of alleged information attributed to George Kapitan (whom I know was a contributor to Timely Publications).

Even if Mr. Kapitan remembered what Bill Everett allegedly said about the genesis of Sub-Mariner correctly (and I cannot be sure of that), Mr. Nelson, in my opinion, falls back on a dangerous misdirection (which I have encountered previously) when he writes of Everett's alleged intention to have had the Sub-Mariner debut in MPFW instead of Marvel Comics #1. Intention (especially hearsay about intention, nearly fifty-seven years after the supposed fact) does not constitute appearance.

Mr Nelson does not make matters any better when he attempts to minimize the importance of the official records of the Library of Congress/Bureau of Copyright.

Personally (and with obvious exception of Mr. Nelson and other genuine researchers like him) I feel that many of the attempts to promote MPFW #1 as the first appearance of Sub-Mariner might be construed as playing to special interests with a financial stake in the outcome of public opinion.

I was gratified last year to see auction reporting in CBM — that showed a higher price fetched for a copy of Marvel Mystery Comics #7 than for a copy of MPFW #1, gratified in the sense that perhaps, though my efforts over many years (and in the face of many adversaries, some very prominent) I feel have succeeded in protecting some people from spending a lot of money for the wrong reasons.

I was very happy to see the name Roger Nelson in the aforementioned letter. I had wonderful dealings with him, as an eager, wide-eyed teen, many years ago. He sold me my first Captain America #1.

What may be more interesting, though, was that Roger showed me my first glimpse (in any form, including reproductions) of Marvel Comics #1. It was missing its back cover. Nevertheless, Roger apparently regarded it as his most prized cartoon-book, and would not have sold it. At that time, he never made mention of any previous Sub-Mariner appearance that had ever been published, let alone that he had ever owned. While I will not say that it is impossible that Roger ever owned one of the promos known as MPFW, I find it curious that he would have not saved it, as he had his Marvel Comics #1.

I also cannot accept quotes attributed to Roger's recollections of 1939-40 as definitive proof that MPFW appeared first. My alleged owner of both magazines from that period, Edward Lahmann, empathically remembered having Marvel Comics #1 first, and, without repeating the lengthy case I had published in your magazine, I will just say that various people and evidence seem to support Mr. Lahmann.

Now I will attempt to address other controversies:

(1) I am a supporter of careful repair of treasures of cartoon art. I have done such things since my teens. I believe that my primary obligation is to ensure the survival of books etc. I feel virtually no obligation to some theoretical customer for my treasures.

Repair and restoration are standard, respected practices, employed by great museums and libraries. I see no good reason to ban them in our relatively young field.

I'm not saying that the replacement of covers or whole pages, with repros, should not effect the value of our cartoon books, but cleaning, pressing, sealing tears, and minor color touch-ups should not make a difference.

I view the objections as a threat to the survival of treasures that are perishing through the slow fire of oxidation, and past mistreatment. I view the insistence on certificates of repair/restoration, and the use of the term 'apparent condition,' not only as rather silly but essentially unenforceable. Basically, I view the overall emphasis (plural) on condition as fanatical and hysterical, especially with ultra-rare treasures, and that such things are often so hard to find that the price spreads between grades are (in my opinion) misleading, as well as too wide.

(2) I also view the emphasis on 'key' issues with some degree of dismay. I think that what is considered 'key' may be highly subjective and limited. What is more, it may be highly subject to the opinions of dealers, and limited to what certain dealers (who advise various "guides") have for sale. Many "key" issues remain sadly unrecognized, largely due to their rarity, and thus, the lack of access that most people have to them.

(3) Finally, our colleagues should understand the difference between value (the intrinsic satisfaction that something affords a buyer or owner) and price (the often extrinsic amount of money that an owner asks for some item or goods). They are not the same, and as

the old saying indicates, "one can know the price of everything, and the value of nothing."

With my respect and good wishes

Warren Reece is a nationally known expert on Marvel/Timely history. Curator of the Chamber Of Fantasy Archive, and a contributor to the original CBM.

PHIL CARPENTER

The relative scarcity of certain comics is full of inconsistencies!

I enjoyed CBM #34 very much, especially [illegible] ing for another all-out discussion on a very favorite topic of mine — scarcity! In fact, an article entitled "DC before Superman" in the Overstreet Price Guide #13 (1983) placed the bee in my bonnet years ago. After this I have always wondered about the relative scarcity of certain comics and have been annoyed by the many inconsistencies regarding this very important issue. Because the pages of CBM are where the paradigms should be built and the myths debunked, I would like to make a few points to help ensure that the genie gets out of the bottle.

The Overstreet Price Guide and the Gerber Photo-Journal are two very well respected sources of information that have made some progress with respect to the scarcity issue. Unfortunately, there are many inconsistencies. In fact, Overstreet and Gerber do not even agree on the definition of "scarce." Overstreet defines scarce as 20-100 existing copies (#25) and Gerber defines scarce as 21-50 copies, giving it a numerical rating of 7. Furthermore, Overstreet estimates that there are 35+ copies of All American #16 in existence, but lists the book as "Rare," which according to the index in the Guide means that there are 10-20 copies in existence! The Guides have been full of these contradictions for years and I cannot possibly be the only person to have noticed and been annoyed by this.

Another facet of this topic concerns the scarcity of a certain type of book, something that I am opposed to. A good example of this is Spider-Man #28, a book that is listed as "scarcer" in high grade, undoubtedly due to the black cover. If this is allowed, then why not the same for Detective #168, another black cover? Why not all black covers? Speaking of Detective, how about #120, the famed white Penguin cover that is listed as rare above fine because it has a white cover? Well why not other white covered books like Action #102, a great Myxtplk cover?

Many years ago a guy wrote an article in Alan Light's TBG who was trying to take a census for rare and scarce books. He was interested in determining the precise number of Action #1's and the like out there. Anyone remember this? The column failed but I think that the principle is solid. The Gerber and Overstreet estimates should be revised and some sort of organized registry should ultimately be created. There are several approaches to getting an idea of how scarce some books are.

1. Records. Publication, circulation, and sales figures. Hard to dig up but very informative. The entertaining article "DC before Superman" really tells us something about the relative scarcity of early DC comics.

2. Demand. There is nothing like strong demand to beat those books out of the bushes! Sometimes intense demand (which translates into higher prices) cannot get a true collector to part with a book. Recently however, the collecting community witnessed an intense wave of demand for Golden Age books. As the demand rises, so do the prices and so does the availability of comics. As a result, we witnessed how certain scarce things can and might be brought out. Consequently, some books that I thought of as being rare turned up more often at conventions and on mailing lists than I expected. Such books include Action #5, which the Guide once listed as rare, Flash Comics #1, many of the so-called tough More Fun books (post Superman) and especially All-American #16. On the other hand, books like Detective Comics #2 seldom pop up.

3. Experience. People "know" that some comics are very tough to find because they have been trying to find them for years to complete their collections. As a collector of Harvey comics, I know that some of the early Little Dot books (e.g. #9 and #11) are very difficult to locate. In fact, Little Dot #6 is not pictured in the Gerber guide and some of these early Little Dots are absent from the Harvey warehouse collection purchased by Steve Geppi and were not part of the early 1980's theft of comics from Harvey. In contrast, we know that many Superman books (e.g. #2 15) are everywhere and any Silver Age Marvel book is anything but scarce.

The rarity/scarcity issue is an evolving one. New collections surface and long-anonymous collectors reveal their books every so often. Thus it may be important to call a book by it's collection name (not necessarily a pedigree though) for documentation purposes. Despite the flaws of Overstreet and Gerber, they are the best start to date. We should always be striving towards a perfect census, at least on the important books. Although some will no doubt attach such information as bells and whistles to the book, it will serve as a very valuable piece of information to the comic fans, historians, and collectors that we are... or should be.

J. KEITH CONTARINO

The rantings of a madman with 30 years experience in comics!

A little over a year ago in Comics Source, an article of mine entitled "Is Silver Age Dead or Merely Ailing?" was published. The response was amazing. Dealers reacted as if I had shot their dog or kidnapped their child. Overwhelmingly, dealers and collectors alike agreed with me 100%. In that article I said exactly what everyone knew to be true, Silver Age had gotten insanely expensive and other than extremely high grade books and keys almost nothing was selling. I also said that while Golden Age books at that time represented a better value than did Silver, that too would slow as those prices escalated. With price guides coming out seemingly on a daily basis, this hobby is now going through "value cycles" in months that at one time took years.

Some dealers were up in arms because I had dared to suggest such a thing, regardless of the fact that it was actually happening out there in the real world. Dealers argued that they were still getting huge prices for NM Silver books like Spiderman 1-50, FF 1-10, DD 1, Avengers 1&4 etc. I, myself, was also recently involved in the sale of a VF+ Action 252 at above the $2,000. A true NM Spidey #6 brings double guide. (How many VG Spider-man #35s has anyone sold recently... at any price?), a NM FF #5 brings $6,000, a NM FF #1 $29,000. What do I say to all these examples?

So What, So What, So What!!

These type of books... do not a market make! And if they do, then we are all in a heap

of trouble folks! Truly splendid (a grading term first used by Rob Ronin—Hi Rob) NM Silver high demand books like the above are 1)Very scarce and 2) Good investments. But the vast majority of books out there for sale are neither high grade nor keys. What about GD or VG copies of JLA #3-18, or Atom #1-22, or Rip Hunter #1, or FF #15-50, or Spidey #25-75? Is there any market at all for these books? For that matter, what about low grade copies of Daredevil #1 or Avengers #4 or even Spidey #1? At current Guide prices is there a market for them? Even nice VF copies of Spider-Man #40-75 (books that guide around $35),do they sell at any price? I know someone in a letter chastised me saying he would take all my truly NM Avengers in the 20's and 30's at Guide and went on to say that I suffered from the delusion that if I couldn't sell something then no one could. Well I never got around to responding but I'm here to say now that I didn't then nor am I now merely referring to my sales. This is a nationwide problem folks and if we as reputable dealers/collectors don't do something about it, we are going to lose even more people in this hobby.

Not that long ago (the mid-80's) we went through some tough times. I remember having a conversation with Jon Warren bemoaning the fact that no one was buying Silver Age and specifically wondering aloud if there was something we could do to get people interested in buying books like Journey Into Mystery #83 again. A short time after, Jon came up with the idea of the Updates and Bulletins and a whole new era of collecting Silver Age was born. As an offshoot, prices sky-rocketed and now have driven many collectors away. I'll give you an example. I was speaking to a good friend of mine the other day who is an airline pilot and a collector of high grade hero and pre-heroes Marvels. Now he is justifiably paid a lot of money to make sure the plane he is flying does not run into the side of a mountain. Well, guess what? He can no longer afford to complete his early Marvels in NM.

What do you predict someone like him (who makes a good wage and isn't even that grade conscious) will think when he's asked to pay $3,000 for a VG+ Fantasy #15? I believe (as do many) that "completists" have always been the type of collector that kept the overall engine of the market running smoothly.

Some dealers are quick to suggest "Buy 70's books… they're still cheap and plentiful" Yeah they are but, again, SO WHAT? Those of us that grew up with Kirby FFs and Ditko Spideys are not real interested in Deathlock or Ms Marvel. Certainly there are 70's collectors, but what about all the 50's and 60's guys that don't even bother showing up at conventions anymore? They were our life blood and many of them are… GONE!

I have attended (and had books for sale) at cons over the last 9 months… and from where I sat things were pretty dismal! I mainly sold $5 books, most of which Guided at $30 and above. Just for grins I put a Rip Hunter #1 in VG- in the $5 box and it went to three shows and didn't sell. Ditto for a nice VF- Daredevil #10. Almost nothing sells "off the rack" and it's not just me. Sure, some books are selling and will continue to. But the hundreds of books that used to fly out of boxes or off the racks simply don't.

Why? Well far be it from me to not have an opinion (laughter). Run-of-the-mill Silver either by grade or issue number or title is just too damn expensive! Because (All of you that know me were waiting for this weren't you?) the price guides are totally inaccurate when it comes to pricing and to price spreads. It's gotten so silly that CBG runs a column on how to do a price guide and then lists Spawn #1 at $20!!! The mentality at all the price guides seems to be if prices don't keep going up, no one will buy the next issue (which may be true, I don't know)… but what we are left with is a hoard of price guide buyers that have this "rosy" but inaccurate idea about what their books are worth (especially new books).

Watch someone at a show try to sell a dealer 2 or 3 long boxes of material less than 5 years old… it's a downright sad thing to watch. I have a friend here in town that called 15 comic shops and NONE were buying recent books at ANY PRICE! He got a 10 cent each offer on four boxes of books that guided over $2,500! This included such so-called hot items as autographed copies of Spawn #1 and Spider-Man #1 and runs of newer X-Men.

My point is that certain price guides are "pandering" to new book buyers and feel they must price Silver as inaccurately as the new stuff to at least appear accurate. I mean how would it look if Spawn #1 kept going up but Avengers #1 didn't?

What kills me is that I firmly believe there is actually no need to drop Silver Prices to get the market back!! That's right!! I agree that truly NM books with few exceptions should continue to go up, or at least remain high… but two things need to happen to get prices and interest back.

1) The price guides and the rest of us need to publicly state that VF and in some cases VF/NM are no longer high grades for much of the Silver Age material. By that I mean, even accurately graded VF's are actually in plentiful supply (and many so-called NMs are nothing more than nice VFs).

2) The price spreads have to widen drastically and on the more expensive books they have to be individualized. VF/NM Spidey #1s are plentiful, VF/NM Fantasy 15's are not. Consequently, a VF/NM Fantasy 15 should command a higher % of the NM price than would a VF/NM Spidey #1. I think there are around 250 Silver Age books that need to be individualized. The rest a computer could handle. But even if there are 2,000, it still could and should be done.

What should the spreads be? Well, it's a crazy concept I know, but how about what the market dictates? If a Spidey #46 in Good is a $2 book and a NM is a $70 book, than the spread from GD to NM should be 1-35. If this is true for the vast majority of Silver books than that's what the spread should be for run-of-the-mill Silver. I'd like to see something along the lines of 1-1.5-2-5-8-30 for GD-VG-FN-VF-VF/NM-NM for starters. Maybe even wider.

How to go about this? I'd immediately contact 5-10 reputable dealers that actually see and sell lots of books and get their opinions. The opinion of someone that only deals mail order NM Silver should count for his area of expertise as should the opinion of the dealer that only does shows but does 20 or 30 a year and carries 4 tables of inventory to each show. In fact, his opinion should count for more as he has more total sales. Store owners should also be contacted for their input. For far too long, the price guides have relied on a few high sales to establish prices. This is NOT what Jon had in mind when he first started the Updates. Back then it was the job of his advisors to not only report their own sales but to contact others to find out more data. For example, I primarily did mail order back then and 3-5 shows a year. Every few months I would contact 5 local store owners and at least 10 store own-

ers/convention dealers throughout the southeast and get actual sales. Other advisors did the same. We need to get back to what was honest and what worked.

Interestingly, I received my latest CBM as I was finishing this article. Guess What? Even Marnin Rosenberg is saying what I said a more than a year ago. I quote; "High priced books below VF/NM are becoming difficult to sell at Guide prices" and "We are discounting almost all our books below VF". Remember that Marnin deals mainly in keys and high grades. Imagine what kind of discounting must be done to sell a GD/VG JLA 18! Marnin's recent sales include a slew of high grade Marvels. Again, SO WHAT??? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out books like FF #12 in NM will sell. How about reported sales of FF #37 in FN- or even VG+!

But, by far the most interesting Market Report was Dan Greenhalgh's from Showcase New England. Dan is not only extremely reputable, he also sells tons of books, keys and non-keys and all grades. His actual prices realized exactly support what I have been speculating. Let's look at a few. Fantasy 15 is still THE Marvel. Dan got $30,000 for a NM-, $4400 for a FN and $2500 for a VG+. Extrapolating a bit, that's an approximate GD-FN-NM price spread of 1-4-40! (The new big Overstreet uses 1-3-15.

But Dan's actual sales of other books are actually more insightful as to true market conditions. Not to bore you anymore with numbers but look at his Amazing Spider-Man #2 figures. These clearly point out the enormous disparity between nice VF's and truly beautiful NM's and higher. His NM+ (which is probably a NM 94 or 95) brought $6,250, over double Guide! Yet a VF+ brought way less than this and a solid VF less than 1/3!! That's the real market on Silver in what used to be the high grade range of "VF and above".

I'm suggesting it simply is not true anymore... i.e. that VF grade Silver Marvels (and many others) should be considered rare. The problem, of course, is not just the price guides but also dealers who make the illogical step that if a NM94 is worth X dollars than a VF is worth around 70% of X. After all, isn't this what the guides say? So the result is a nice VF Amazing Spider-Man #2 with a price tag of $4,000. Why? Because a NM is worth $6,000! I have seen and heard this at shows until I want to scream! It doesn't seem to bother these folks that their books are not selling at guide... in fact, many oblivious dealers and collectors just keep raising the price as each new Guide comes out. I guess they're working under the misconception that wishing for it real real hard will make it so.

I think it's time for price guides to go back to doing what price guides in should do... report prices, period! I have been "lectured" by price guide higher-ups for years in this regard, with excuses about not lowering prices or expanding price spreads. They say it's because collectors and investors of low to mid-grade material will see their investments go down. Well, ya know, so what! I wasn't thrilled when my K-Mart stock dropped from $16 to $6 a share but that's life in the big city. I continued to buy K-Mart. The lower it got, the more I bought. Now those $6 shares are $9.50 and things look better.

My point? Prices are what they are and no guide should attempt to unrealistically restrain market movement, up or down! And especially just to keep collectors "happy." Ironically, they are actually accomplishing the exact opposite... by driving away of disgruntled collector/investors who become disillusioned when they try to sell some of their non-primo material.

One more brief thing. I need to respond to some of the contributors to this months' CBM. Scotty Moore has a little problem with the concept of pedigrees. The concept of pedigrees in small animals is to try to ensure what one can realistically expect when purchasing a pet. When you buy a Whippet, for example, with a pedigree of a long line of lure course champions, you have a reasonable expectation that dog will be a good lure courser. That is precisely why certain pedigree comics ARE worth more than non-pedigree copies of the same book even in similar grade. Why? Because the Mile Highs are the best copies known in most cases and all grades other than MINT are ranges and NM Mile Highs are the absolute top NM. Many other pedigree collections are extremely nice and also should get premium prices. I agree with Scotty that a NM Superman 18 for example should bring Mile High price if comparable to the Mile High, but in most cases this is not true. Many collections that have been pedigreed probably should not have based on the lack of uniformity throughout. This is true of the Overstreet collection. While it is historically significant and many of the books are splendid, many are not so you don't necessarily know what you are getting simply because a book is from that collection. Also, I don't think a collection has to be a one owner to deserve a pedigree. As an example: if a collector of high grade DC's had been meticulously purchasing the nicest copies available over 25 years and upgrading when he can, that collection would deserve pedigree status is ever sold. Enough on this!!!

Of course it goes without saying that accurate grading throughout the industry is an absolute must. All these prices and spreads are useless if people can't or won't grade properly. I know Gary Carter & Bob Overstreet put a lot of work into the Overstreet Grading Guide but I still find it basically useless as a tool for the average collector or dealer. It is a step in the right direction, however, but I feel is actually too tight in terms of numbers as they will not be reproducible over time. And besides, there's no one actually grading any books as a service anyway.

Also, I don't think the PCE system is the perfect answer either. I feel it tries to be scientific about a process that is actually an art. Their system does not (nor does any system) take into account the "over-all appeal" of the book which by definition is highly subjective. Besides, while it is not hard for a seasoned grader to predict what grade a book will get using their system (if you have seen a lot of them), no one outside of their offices actually knows the exact criteria they use. Moreover, since they are in the business of buying and selling comics, someone who doesn't know how absolutely honest Robert Roter is (and he is!) might think that because they have a vested interest in all the books they grade, that there might be an apparent "conflict of interest." In this regard, I feel strongly we still need a grading service that does not buy and sell books and also, a service that will certify the amount of restoration a book may have.

As always, the above thoughts are purely my own (as if anyone else would want to claim them) and I doubt if any of the higher-ups at CBM agree with me. In fact, if Gary has any sense, he will print this as the rantings of a madman (although a madman with over 30 years experience in comics!!)... and he will disavow any knowledge of me at all! ■

THRILLING THRILLING & SUPER SUPER MYSTERY

BY MATT NELSON

Welcome back to Unseen Gold where collectors find the missing pictures from the indispensable *Photo-Journal*! This month will feature not one, but two covers absent from *Gerber's*. The first cover is *Super-Mystery* Vol 6 #1 (August 1946), and the second cover is *Thrilling Comics* #33 (February 1943), which, in my opinion is a vastly underrated and overlooked comic!

The cover of *Super-Mystery* V6#1 features an infamous "bondage/torture" cover. A man hanging by his wrists, who has obviously been worked over, is saved at the last moment by our whip-wielding heroine (say THAT three times real fast!). She whips the villain's heater right out of his hand (much to his chagrin) as the others look on in shock! The book is pretty tough to find. I've seen only a handful, and all were in Very Good condition. Gerber ranks it an "8" (11-20 copies existing).

Super-Mystery was published by Ace Comics, a company which only had moderate success in the superhero comic field during the 1940's. Of the small handful of titles published by Ace during the war years, only two titles survived past 1942. *Super-Mystery* was one; the other was *Four Favorites*. Because Ace was such a small player in the comic industry, I imagine print runs and thus, surviving copies of Ace published comics were relatively small. This theory is supported by the fact that Ernie Gerber was unable to locate a copy of *Super-Mystery* V6#1 and TWO issues of *Four Favorites* (#24 and #26, which were featured in CBM #31). It is indeed a very rare occurrence for two covers of a series to be absent from The *Gerber Guide*. As an interesting aside, *Super-Mystery* V6#1 (which is cover dated August 1946) came out in-between *Four Favorites* #24 (July 1946) and #26 (November 1946). It's just possible that Ace had a rough couple of months with their comic book distribution.

This is not uncommon with comic companies. Take for instance, Fiction House. The last half of 1941 (August-December) this company had a difficult time getting their books to the stands. The rarest issues of each run all occur during the same period. *Fight* #14 (August, scarcity=7, low grade copy pictured), *Jumbo* #31 (September, scarcity=9, no Mile High exists), *Jungle* #21 (September scarcity=7), *Planet* #15 (November, scarcity=9, famous rare issue) *Rangers* #2 (December, scarcity=8), and *Wings* #13 & #14 (September/October, scarcity=7). If one examines the scarcity indexes of other runs, many other "trends" like this one are revealed.

The second "Unseen Gold" book this month is a personal favorite of mine, *Thrilling* #33. I must admit, I'm a sucker for Nedor books . . . especially those with great covers and inarguably less-than-great interior art. This issue of *Thrilling* is one comic I hold near and dear to my heart. Although its graphics don't hold a candle to its Unseen Gold sister, *Exciting* #28, I feel that this book is just as rare (if not rarer)! Even with the "Nedor demand boom" of recent

"I must admit, I am a sucker for Nedor books... especially those with great covers and arguably less-than-great interior art."

months, I have seen only two copies offered for sale in the last three years.

Yes it's true... the cover was not rendered by the great Nedor guru Alex Schomburg, but *Thrilling* #33's cover still qualifies for the description, "awesome-to-behold." The use of reds and yellows in the design make this cover literally leap out at you, and practically "glow in the dark." As you observe our hero, Dr. Strange, is socking a very red-looking devil-man in the head with a wrench, you quickly notice that it is rendered in the no-nonsense style common to Nedors of the era. The art conveys a very Golden Age-esque image, especially when the color scheme is considered... it all makes for a very wild cover!

This is one of only two Nedors missing from the *Photo Journals*, and is one of the most difficult to locate. With its scarcity rating of "8" and its astoundingly inexpensive *Guide* value ($85 in Fine), I'd recommend a nationwide search for this treasure before they become even more impossible to find! Most dealers and collectors feel that Nedors still have room to grow... and *Thrilling* #33 looks like one book with no ceiling! ■